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A PRACTICAL MEDITATION.

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

A Practical Meditation.

BY

NEWMAN HALL,

LL.B., D.D. (EDIN.),

Author of

"DIVINE BROTHERHOOD IN 'THE MAN CHRIST JESUS,'" "GETHSEMANE," "THE ATONEMENT," "COME TO JESUS," ETC. ETC.

THIRD EDITION REVISED.

EDINBURGH:

T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.

1897.

THIS HUMBLE CONTRIBUTION TO THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE IS LAID ON THE ALTAR THAT SANCTIFIETH THE GIFT, IN THE HOPE THAT IT MAY AID IN THE DEVOUT AND PRACTICAL STUDY OF THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL.

PREFACE.

—o—

My theme is old, but so comprehensive and important that its interest is ever new.

The quarry, however diligently worked, is inexhaustible; but its most valuable treasures are most readily found, and are public property.

A commentary which excluded every topic already discussed would lose in usefulness more than it gained in originality.

Every age is enriched by inheritance. The stream becomes fuller the farther it flows.

Thus, to compensate the lack of novelty in the theme, I have not hesitated to profit by the labours of predecessors, both by quotation, in every case indicated, and by suggestion. Amongst others are—Leighton; Luther; Deans Alford, Vaughan, Stanley, Farrar; Rev. Doctors Barrow, Tholuck, Saphir, Dale; Revs. A. Faringdon, T. Manton, Edward White, and F. D. Maurice (frequently); Watson, Hare, Carlyle, etc.

Scripture quotations are generally from the R. V.

In this third edition, though the style is condensed, the whole substance is retained, with some additions.

NEWMAN HALL.

London, *May* 1897.

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THE LORD'S PRAYER.

INTRODUCTORY.

(REVISED VERSION.)

St. Matthew vi. 9–13.	St. Luke xi. 2–4.
Our Father which art in heaven,	Father,
Hallowed be Thy Name.	Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy kingdom come.	Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.	
Give us this day our daily bread.	Give us day by day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.	And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us.
And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.	And bring us not into temptation.

THE prayer which our Lord delivered to His disciples as a model in their approaches to God, is recorded by two Evangelists as spoken on two different occasions.

In the sermon on the Mount, reported by St. Matthew, Jesus was reproving the superstition which regarded the frequent iteration of mere words as acceptable to God, and the Pharisaism which paraded

prayer to obtain the praise of men. St. Luke records that at a later period of Christ's ministry, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught His disciples.'" This disciple may have forgotten the earlier instruction; or he may have desired some counsel specially applicable to the inner circle of the disciples, similar to some teaching so given to the more intimate friends of the Baptist. But our Lord simply repeated the subject-matter of the same Divine model, as containing the essence of all we need to ask, and as showing the spirit and manner of all acceptable prayer. Matt. vi. 5–13; Luke xi. 1–4.

Duty and Reasonableness of Prayer.

On both occasions the reasonableness and duty of prayer were taken for granted; the Divine authority of our Lord being superadded to that of the older revelation. Prayer is not simply one of many other features of religion; but is essential to its existence. "There is not among all moral instincts a more universal, a more invincible one than prayer. The child betakes himself to it with ready docility; aged men return to it as a refuge against decay and isolation. Prayer rises spontaneously from young lips that can scarcely lisp the name of God, and from expiring ones that have scarcely strength left to pronounce it" (Guizot). The acknowledgment of a

superior Being by adoration and petition, harmonizes with our intellectual and moral instincts. "As the magnetic needle points to the unseen pole, so the soul, before it is hardened or demagnetized by the rude blows of the world, will point to the home and heart of the Great Father" (H. R. Reynolds). We feel it is befitting that we render adoration to Him on whom we are dependent for breath and all things, extolling His greatness, seeking His favour, and thanking Him for His gifts. The almost universal practice of prayer is proof of a general belief in its utility. We pray, expecting some direct advantage, besides the wholesomeness of the exercise. Digging a garden may improve the health, but the hope of produce speeds the digging. Holy Scripture and the authority of Christ encourage us to expect positive benefits from prayer.

OBJECTIONS.

That God knows already whatever we can tell Him.—But He desires also to know our wishes from ourselves. An earthly parent may know many of the child's desires and griefs, but likes to hear them from the child's own lips, and the habit of telling them cultivates filial affection. In prayer we are not instructing God, but communing with Him.

That we cannot improve God's Methods nor alter His Decrees.—Benefit from action of His may depend on fitness in ourselves. The gift, to be beneficial, needs certain qualities in the recipient. The purpose

of God may therefore embrace the prayer of man, the object of which is not to improve His plans, but to complete their manifestation. God may, in answer to our prayer, change His methods without any fluctuation of purpose. A sailor alters his tack to reach his port. A father carries out his abiding intention by altering his treatment according to the child's conduct. A physician, steady to his purpose, varies his medicine with varying symptoms. Prayer may so alter our own moral condition as to render suitable a change of method on God's part, which will bring us the very blessing we ask. Though all God's purposes are unalterably sure, we guard our body from accident, and take pains to secure the comforts of life. If we think we can improve our condition by exertions of our own, is it foolish to hope God may improve them in answer to our prayer?

Our asking may be a necessary condition of His giving. Good seed will be wasted unless the soil be prepared to receive it. Without healthy appetite, wholesome food may injure. The soul must "hunger and thirst after righteousness" before it can be filled; and prayer stimulates as well as reveals this spiritual appetite. So also gifts of Providence may require the receptivity which prayer cultivates, to render those gifts beneficial. Prayer brings us into the Divine storehouse where God's gifts are waiting for us. "Those things which God intends for us, we bring to ourselves by the mediation of holy prayers" (Jer. Taylor). God's light is always shining, but into the

region of it we must come as He has ordained. "Thus prayer becomes the turning of the heart to Him who is always prepared to give, if we will receive what He gives. Unto a fountain so vast, the empty vessel must be moved" (Augustine-Trench).

No place for Prayer in the realm of Law.—There are various laws of force. That of Gravitation draws solid bodies to the earth. But in spite of it Vegetable Life lifts tons of timber up into the air. There is also the force of Will and Mind which moves matter. By our will we can influence that of others, through instruction and persuasion, and prompt them to set in motion a train of physical causation which may bring to pass events otherwise impossible. I may by personal influence (call it prayer) induce the crew of a lifeboat to save shipwrecked seamen, whom otherwise the waves, by natural law, would destroy. I may by persuasion (prayer) induce a physician to go to a man seemingly at death's door, and he, not by miracle, but by working within the sphere of law, may save a life which otherwise, by physical law, would have been the victim of disease. I may, by the exercise of my own will, hold out my arms to catch, when falling from a window, the child whom otherwise the law of gravitation would have killed. If then even I, by the exercise of my will, can interpose to bring about results in the operation of natural law, and can influence other wills to do the same, it cannot be impossible that the Author of Nature, without any interference with order, may do, in answer to prayer,

what my fellow-creature can do on my request, and what I can do myself. Must the Divine order shut out the operation of the Divine Will? Shall the uniform working of natural law be consistent with the exercise of freedom on my part, and not with that of freedom on God's part?

We do not believe that the "Reign of Law" excludes the agency of the "Lord of Law." Whence came the laws but from the Divine Mind? "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," and not in eternal forces without thought, emotion, or character. He is free to act in modes novel to us, yet in harmony with law. Seeming changes may be law's developments, and my prayer and His response may be parts of the eternal order; God working according to pre-arranged principles which are developed whenever their appropriate sphere of operation unfolds. Thus our prayers may bring about the very conditions in which the results we ask may come to pass, in harmony with the higher order, which includes moral as well as physical force. This argument assumes the universal reign of Law. But we also believe in the reign of Grace.

Such objections have been current in all ages; yet in all ages prayer has been offered; and the worshippers have included the wisest and best of men. Poets, statesmen, heroes, prophets have prayed. Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel brought petitions to God, habitually, earnestly, and in full assurance of faith. Have those who in all ages have felt such yearnings

and employed the highest faculties of the mind been mistaken? If so, "the whole human race has a lie enshrined in its inmost heart; and this lie perpetually emerges age after age, generation after generation, in the child and the philosopher, in the heathen and the Christian. If it be so, the most noble are the most deceived; those who have in the largest extent blessed their fellow-men have been the most deluded; while, on the other hand, the sensualist, the barbarian with the fewest ideas, the imbecile who is most like the brute that perisheth, has made, in a matter that is fundamental to happiness, honour, and usefulness, the nearest approach to the truth of things" (Reynolds).

O men of science! all honour to you in your own sphere. Show us the beauty, the wisdom, the beneficence of God, by showing us the order that pervades His works. But do not shut Him out of His own creation. Do not say that your experiments with microscope and telescope include all the facts of the universe, when the facts of Christianity and the facts of consciousness are not within your induction. There are facts which are incapable of being subjected to scientific scrutiny. God will not, at your bidding, come into your laboratory, cross the field of your telescope, or enter the wing of some hospital which you may choose to designate for experiments upon His handiwork. "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your *philosophy*."

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of ;
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,
Both for themselves and those who call them friends ?
For so the whole round world is every way
Bound by gold chains around the feet of God."—TENNYSON.

REFLEX BENEFITS OF PRAYER.

Humility.—In the presence of the Infinite we feel our insignificance. In proportion as by prayer we have really met with God, we are less disposed unduly to exalt ourselves over our fellow-creatures, since we are all alike but "dust and ashes" in His sight. When we see God, we "abhor ourselves."

Dignity.—There can be no greater honour than personal intercourse with God. We cannot leave the Presence Chamber of the Infinite, feeling we are mere grains of sand in a desert—unnoticed, uncared for, hopeless. No ! we are living persons, and are in direct communion with a personal God, who hears our voice, reads our heart, helps our need. This produces a grand humility, a self-abasing dignity, which will make us respect both ourselves and all our fellows, and should keep us from dragging our nobility in the mud of sinful indulgence.

Sincerity.—We are apt before our fellow-men to wear a mask, to hide our defects, to magnify our merits, or simulate those we do not possess. Before Him who knows the secrets of all hearts, the mask must be thrown off. In prayer we learn to know

ourselves, to discover our hidden faults, to test the true nature of our motives and conduct.

Holiness.—It is one thing to credit the fact that God is holy; it is quite another thing to feel that we are in the very presence of that Holy God. Thus it is that the habit of praying induces the habit of obeying. It conveys no new truth, but it strengthens holy impulses. We cannot come direct from an interview with the King, and readily violate His laws; from converse with our Father, and forget the claims of His love.

Moderation of Desire.—Longings which may become passions, poisoning our whole life, must be checked when we try to bring them before God in prayer. When we wish for some questionable pleasure, some unrighteous gain, the gratification of vanity or revenge, and, by the heating of this internal furnace of wrongful desire, are in danger of some explosion which might be our ruin, the expression of such desire to God will reprove and possibly destroy it. There is so much we cannot ask God to give! We are ashamed, afraid to ask it.

Trust and Courage.—If we have any real faith in prayer, hope of needful help will enable us to bear our trials more patiently; to brace ourselves anew for difficult duty; to continue the fight from which we were ready basely to flee.

Peace and Consolation.—By the mere telling our troubles to a sympathizing friend, the burden is lightened, the bitter cup sweetened, the wound half

healed. Much more should this be the result of pouring forth our heart-sorrows before a compassionate God, our Father. If "by prayer and supplication we make known our requests," we need "be anxious in nothing, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus."

Gratitude.—Prayer cultivates gratitude, by linking benefits with Him from whom they are asked. Recognition of the giver enhances the gift. Gratitude prompts to willing service, stimulates obedience, and promotes our own happiness. They who do not pray are not likely to praise. "In the earnest asking is the needful preparation for receiving with due thankfulness; while, on the contrary, the unsought would often remain the unacknowledged also." Prayer thus elevates earthly benefits into Divine blessings, so that the humblest fare of God's providing yields greater delight than costliest dainties regarded as the result of accident, or of our own unaided efforts. Does an objector say that all this reflex benefit is only the natural effect of certain ideas? Then it is evident that our moral organization is adapted to this exercise, and we infer that our Maker and the Being to whom we pray are one and the same; for He who bids us pray has so constituted us that compliance with His law corresponds with our moral nature, satisfies, purifies, exalts and gladdens it.

Christ's Authority for Prayer.

Though Divine He prayed, because He was also human, and shared our weaknesses and wants. He prayed for a blessing on the bread He broke, for help in the miracles He wrought, for comfort in the sorrows He endured. He retired to mountain-solitudes for prayer. He prayed in the upper chamber for His disciples; in the garden and on the cross for Himself and for His murderers. He has gone up to heaven to pray, and sitteth on the right hand of God to intercede. If He, without stain of sin, and in perfect accord with God, needed to pray, how much more must we! And this He enjoined on His followers by precept and promise. "Ask, and ye shall receive." "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him."

His great work was to help man's approach to God. His mediation was to remove the obstacle of our guilt. His Spirit was to remove the disinclination of our hearts. He was "the Way;" and He said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Acceptance of His salvation brings men at once into the presence of their Father. Faith in Him is life; and the evidence and exercise of the Divine life in the soul is prayer. He brings men into a condition in which prayer is a necessity. He so guides the stream that it must fall into and flow along with the great river. He taught His disciples "always to pray, and not to

faint." If they are to conquer in the strife with sin, the armour of God will not avail unless with the breastplate, shield, helmet, and sword, they "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit." Eph. vi. 13-18.

When our Lord gave this prayer, He ignored all objections. There was no question as to whether the disciples prayed or not. Of course they did. All devout Jews did. The only question was as to the matter and manner of prayer. "When ye pray." Our Lord knew all the objections that ever had been, that ever could be, raised against prayer, yet He said, Pray! He was the Author of Nature, the Creator of the worlds, the Head of the universe of Law, knowing the operation of all forces, yet he said, Pray! He was from eternity in the bosom of the Father, sharing the Father's counsels and eternal purposes, yet He said, Pray! He who conquered death and the grave can, should He so please, suspend the order of Nature in answer to prayer. Nothing is impossible with Him to whom is given "all power in heaven and earth." With full assurance we may pray, when He, who is the only-begotten Son, Himself pleads with the Father on our behalf.

The Method of Prayer.

Form or Freedom?—"When ye pray, *say*," etc. The desires of the heart are to be expressed. Meditation is liable to pass off in frivolous thoughts or

mental drowsiness. It is true that God regards fervent desire as prayer, and that no words avail without it; yet our Lord teaches us to *express* the desires of the heart, which are increased and made definite by utterance. "Take with you words, and return to the Lord: *say* unto Him, Take away all iniquity, so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips." An enthusiastic admirer of nature may sometimes have felt with Wordsworth—

> "In such access of mind, in such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
> No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
> Wrapt into still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
> His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
> That made him; it was blessedness and love."

And there are times when the believer is conscious that "the Spirit maketh intercession within him with groanings which cannot be uttered." Yet these are exceptional seasons. If all prayer were to be denied vocal utterance, little prayer would be left. Our Lord Himself, holding ineffable Spirit-communion with His Father, expressed His divinely-human longings in human words.

This our Lord taught us to do. But in what words? Surely sometimes in the very form prescribed. But did He mean that we should be restricted to this? Were this so, the two versions would be identical. But they vary. In the Revised Version of St. Luke we have simply "Father," instead

of "Our Father which art in heaven." "Thy will be done" is omitted. Instead of "Give us this day," we have "Give us day by day." Instead of "debts," we have "sins"; and instead of "as we also have forgiven our debtors," we have "for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us." These variations show that not the precise form was prescribed, but the substance. Ours is the dispensation not of the letter, but of the Spirit. Dean Alford says: "It is very improbable that the prayer was regarded in the very earliest times as a set form delivered for liturgical use by our Lord. The variations are fatal to the supposition of its being used liturgically at the time when these Gospels were written. Add to this, that we find very few traces of such use in early times. Tholuck remarks: 'It does not occur in the Acts, nor in any writers before the third century. In Justin Martyr we find that the προεστώς prays, according to his power. Cyprian and Tertullian make the first mention of the prayer as an *oratio legitima et ordinaria*.'" Yet this very prayer, though not imposed as an obligatory form, must ever be specially dear to Christian hearts. We feel encouraged when we use a petition drawn up by Himself. But to regard it as of itself efficacious, as though the mere utterance would bring down some blessing; and to repeat it many times, as if the reiteration would more effectually win regard, is to debase what was intended to cure superstition, as an instrument for promoting it.

The question arises, whether, by giving this prayer, our Lord enjoined or sanctioned the use of forms of prayer, in preference to free utterance. There are two extremes; some advocate the exclusive use of forms, others condemn them altogether. In private prayer the spontaneous expression of desire is most natural, and best fitted to promote devotion. Prayer should begin in the heart and find utterance by the lip. No form ever composed can meet all the wants of any one soul. There are sins to confess, sorrows to utter, desires to express, constantly new and varied. The heart cannot be satisfied with mere generalities when the child is alone with its father. The most stammering petition which is the genuine utterance of the heart, is better in private devotion than the most perfect composition of another mind, however helpful this may often be.

For public prayer in a prescribed form the following arguments are urged:—The wants of the congregation as a whole are more likely to be expressed by a form carefully prepared by the concurrence of many minds, than when one individual prays according to his own feelings and circumstances. There is less intellectual excitement when the language is familiar, than when it comes as a novelty, possibly startling by strangeness, bewildering by obscurity, provoking criticism, and suggesting wandering thoughts. There is less of human performance when prayers previously prepared are simply read, than when the leader in worship has to exercise his own powers of conception and

utterance. He is less tempted to obtrude himself, and to consider what others may think of him, than when originating prayers which, though addressed to God, are listened to and judged of by men. The people are better able to take their part in responses when they know what the prayers will be, than when they have to listen and judge before they can intelligently say, Amen. The Psalms were inspired forms of prayer and praise, used by the Jews in the temple-worship.

Against the use of forms, and in favour of free prayer, it may be urged:—Forms are apt to promote formalism. Familiar expressions are heard listlessly. The lip may utter the words unconsciously, while the thoughts may be wandering far away. Forms cannot express all the varied wants of the people; nor be applicable to ever changing circumstances. Forms confine the thoughts, repress the feelings, and restrain the motions of the Divine Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." There are many examples in Scripture of free prayer being offered according to the special circumstances and wants of the worshipper.

There is force in both sets of arguments. Either Form or Freedom is objectionable when one is prescribed to the exclusion of the other. In Christ's religion of liberty, things in themselves lawful become unlawful when what was left optional by the Master is made obligatory by His servants. He sanctioned the liturgic use of the Psalms by His own example at the Passover. Every form of prayer cannot be

consistently condemned by those who habitually employ prayers artistically arranged in verse, and sung to elaborate tunes. Every free prayer is a form, except to the person speaking it. If he utters it from the fulness of his heart at the moment, it is only his own spontaneous prayer. To all who listen it must be a form: as regards the speaker, the emotions prompt the words; but as regards the hearer, the words precede the desires, and do not necessarily produce true prayer in others, though St. John or St. Paul were the speaker. For the exclusion of forms it has been said, that "a hungry beggar does not ask alms by a set form." It is also true that a community, presenting a united request to Government, agree together on the wording of their petition.

Dean Vaughan says: "Christ prohibits not other forms. He forbids not to pray without forms. All that is from the heart is welcome in heaven. But unquestionably He silences here the silly tradition that nothing can be prayer but that which is extemporaneous and sudden. Neither with regard to prayers nor to sermons does the question lie between written and unwritten, but between formal and spiritual." Archbishop Leighton says of forms: "We are not to be bound to their continual use in private or in public; nor is there anything in the word of God, or any solid reason drawn from the word, to condemn their use." A learned and devout Principal of a Nonconformist College (Dr. Reynolds) says: "God does not listen to our words at all, but to our spirits. There is nothing

in a form, when rightly used, inconsistent with the spirituality which is the indispensable condition of acceptable prayer. Sympathy with the blessed dead, communion with those who have passed within the veil, and holy fellowship with all who claim this rich inheritance of the Church, is possible in the use of hallowed, time-honoured forms of praise and prayer; but the refusal to any man of the right to pour out his heart to God in words, fresh-coined there by his own personal sense of infinite need, seems like deliberately quenching the Holy Spirit, and resisting His mightiest operation in the heart of man." The author of the *Pilgrim's Progress* says, "In prayer it is better to have a heart without words, than words without a heart."

Each method has its advantages, and therefore neither should exclude the other. To make human forms binding on the Church which Christ has left free; or to bind the Church not to use forms which He has not forbidden, is equally a restriction of Christian liberty. Forms may degenerate into formalism; and the absolute forbiddal of forms may deprive the Church of much help from the piety and wisdom of past ages, and of the special advantages furnished by concerted prayer, as well as concerted praise. Why should not the Church avail itself of all the help both methods may afford, and rejoice that "all things are ours"? But in vain do we pray, whether in words of our own, or in forms composed by the holiest men and sanctioned by centuries of worship, or in these very words

taught by Christ Himself, unless the heart ascends to God. Alas! how often we have to confess—

> "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;
> Words, without thoughts, never to heaven go."—SHAKESPEARE.

Another question arises. Our Lord gave us, as a model, a prayer characterized by brevity. Did He mean that no prayer should be longer? His own example is opposed to such an idea. We read of His continuing "all night in prayer to God." In the garden He was long in prayer, "saying the same words." After His ascension the disciples "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." St. Paul exhorts Christians to "pray without ceasing," and to "continue instant in prayer." The Scribes were condemned, not for long prayers, but because they made them "*for a pretence.*" The Lord censured mere verbal utterances in place of heart-desires; prayer to be noticed by man instead of to be accepted by God. "It is a bad sign when the prayers made before men are longer than those heard only by God." Every prayer, however few the words, is long if it comes not from the heart; no prayer is long which is the soul's true expression.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

That title might more accurately be given to the prayer of intercession recorded by St. John; our Lord's own desires to His Father, with no mention of sin to be forgiven. This is the disciples' prayer. But as it

was solemnly given on two occasions by their Lord, as suitable for sinful and frail men, the Church has loved to designate it as specially His own.

Its Authorship.—Some critics have said, that as the several petitions may be found in Jewish writings, the prayer is not original, and therefore not "the Lord's." Tholuck says that the similarity which has been criticised between this prayer and prayers of the Rabbis is without force. Our Lord expressly said that He had come, not to destroy the older revelation, but to fulfil; not to ignore any portion of truth already known, but to supplement it. Accordingly, His teaching abounded with allusions to the Old Testament. He often quoted its words as expressive of His own feelings. He died with them on His lips. It would indeed be strange if the petitions in a form solemnly given as being specially in accordance with the Divine will, had no parallel whatever in the devotions of the Old Testament Church. Thus, although the Fatherhood of God was not prominent, yet it was known. "Doubtless Thou art our Father;" "If then I be a Father, where is mine honour? saith the Lord of hosts." The hallowing of the Name was commanded through Moses, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;" illustrated by David, "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised;" and guaranteed by Jehovah, "I will sanctify my great name." The Kingdom was prayed for by David, and predicted by Daniel. The doing the will of God was the subject of frequent petitions: "Teach

me to do Thy will;" "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies." Agur prayed: "Feed me with food convenient for me." Forgiveness was assured by "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity;" and for it the Israelites were encouraged to pray, "Let the wicked return unto the Lord, and He will abundantly pardon." To be delivered from temptation and saved from evil was the burden of many prayers: "Oh, let me not wander from Thy commandments. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." And this was answered by the Divine promise: "The Lord will preserve thee from all evil. He will preserve thy soul."

There was no need, therefore, for our Lord to search the writings of Jewish Rabbis in order to compile this formulary. Its truths were already revealed by His own Spirit through the prophets. What He did was to gather into a focus the scattered rays; to bring out into clearer light what had been indistinctly seen; to give prominence to what had been in the background; to arrange in progressive order what had hitherto existed in disjointed fragments. It is this concentration of so much into a space so small, this taking up of gems which had lain about amid the general stores of the Church, and setting them all together in this circlet of purest gold; it is not only what is included, but what is omitted; it is not the separate petitions, invaluable as they are, but their combination in a prayer unrivalled not only for its substance, but for

"the full brevity, the deep plainness, the comely simplicity of expression" (Barrow);—it is all this which constitutes its superiority to all mere human utterances of devotion. "The Lord's Prayer, for a succession of solemn thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for suitableness to every condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness without obscurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival" (Paley): these features entitle it to be called "The Lord's Prayer."

The General Scope.—As the Ten Commandments are a summary of our duties, so the Lord's Prayer is a summary of what ought to be our desires. The Decalogue begins with duties we owe to God, and passes on to those we owe to one another. The prayer begins with desires for God, and ends with desires for ourselves. The first four commands correspond with the prayers that His name may be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done. The command to honour earthly parents suggests the title of God in the Prayer, reminding us both of duty and privilege; and the bread we ask is the gift of God in heaven for His children's wants on earth. Thus both in the Code and the Prayer we are here brought down to the human level. The rest of the commandments forbid sins; the rest of the petitions seek deliverance from the evils which sin entails. We ask God first for His own good things, and then for deliverance from our own evil things. And as the Decalogue is

prefaced by a statement of His claims on the obedience of the Israelites as their Deliverer from Egypt, so the Prayer is prefaced by the comprehensive plea—"Our Father which art in heaven."

It might be expected that there would be resemblances between the Prayer and the Beatitudes which had just been pronounced. The Prayer teaches that God is our Father, and the Beatitude declares that "peacemakers shall be called the children of God." His name is hallowed by the humble and "meek." The privileges of the Kingdom belong to "the poor in spirit;" for even now, "theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." The will of God is done only by "the pure in heart." The prayer for daily bread has a spiritual as well as physical application, and they realize it who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Sorrowing for sin, we pray that our trespasses may be forgiven, and are assured that "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." We profess that we who ask forgiveness practise it towards others, and we are taught that "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." We ask to be delivered from temptation and all evil, and are assured that, even though persecuted for righteousness' sake, we shall not only be preserved from harm, but that "great shall be our reward in heaven." Matt. v. 1–12.

In my Name.—The prayer is not formally in the name of Jesus. He had not yet fully developed His mediatorial character and work. Subsequently, on the eve of offering Himself as the sacrifice for sin, He

distinctly taught His disciples to pray in His name. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in my name. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled." It is not only in accordance with His teaching that we should thus come before God, but it would be difficult for any one who loved Him as Saviour, to omit His name in any prayer to the Father. Yet much more than the mere use of the word is required if we would pray in His name. We must come to God relying on His mediation, asking what He has taught us to desire, seeking His glory and to be aided by His Spirit, else the formula alone will not fulfil the condition. Thus the apostles prayed. Some of their petitions were offered directly to Christ. Other prayers, without the formula at their close, contained the name of Christ, expressing reliance, homage, service, adoration. Prayer and praise to God, as "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," were offered in this name. That this method of appealing to God was uniform and constant, we may gather from the words of St. Paul: "Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

From these examples it is evident, that praying in His name is not so much the mention of Christ at the end of the prayer, as the breathing through the whole of it of faith and love. It is this reliance on Him, and blending of our will with His in our petitions, which, without the customary clause, render a prayer

more truly Christian than any repetitions of the mere name in the absence of this spirit. And therefore this prayer, because taught by Himself, as the very essence of what we should ask for, is eminently a prayer in His name, when, without the formula, we offer it in obedience to His teaching, and relying on His mediation.

"*After this manner.*"—This means, if not by this very form, yet in this spirit, and for these benefits. Adoration of every kind, prayer for the Divine glory, for the spread of truth, holiness, and happiness, and for help to do and suffer the will of God, are embraced in the first portion of it. Supplication for every real necessity of our nature, the satisfaction of every pure instinct, bodily, mental, social, is involved in asking for daily bread; the confession of sin, and the plea for pardon, are in the prayer "Forgive;" grace to bear with and to forgive others, in the condition annexed; succour in all temptations, and final deliverance from all evil are in the closing petitions. Whatever it is lawful to pray for is embodied here; and therefore at all times, all mankind may pray "after this manner."

They who use liturgies never omit this. They who repudiate the pre-composed prayer of men, with few exceptions avail themselves of this prayer of the Lord Jesus. Whatever the difference of Church government, whatever the variation of creed, all blend their voices harmoniously here. Surely they who from the heart send up to heaven such requests must be really united,

however seemingly divided. In the words of the Dean of Llandaff, "The Church of all space and of all time meets and is one in the Master's Prayer." Thus it is a Divine bond of brotherhood, a fulfilment of the condition joined to the promise, "If two of you agree as touching anything ye shall ask, it shall be given." We are assured that, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us;" and the prayer He Himself taught must be according to His will. We may be sure that His intercession in heaven blends with our prayers on earth, when we pray "after this manner."

It is a prayer capable of ever varied amplification. We may crowd a volume into each clause. We may, in protracted supplication, "continue all night in prayer to God," and yet keep within its limits and be guilty of no vain repetitions. It is suitable for seasons of safety and peril, joy and sorrow, health and sickness, festival and funeral. We may offer it amid the activities of life, and when drawing near to the gates of death. It is suited to all ages and all minds. There are depths in it which the most thoughtful intellect cannot fathom, and shallows where little children may lave their feet: heights which the strongest climber cannot scale, and valleys where the weak and wounded may rest and be refreshed. It was given for the Church universal, in every stage of development, both as a whole and in each member. The new-born child of God may acceptably present it, though he only understands as a child; the matured believer finds

increasing help in it as he puts away childish things. What the poet says of prayer in its various utterances, may be said of this one and the same utterance:

> "Prayer is the simplest form of speech
> That infant lips can try;
> Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
> The Majesty on high."

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

THE INVOCATION.

"OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN."

I.—The Divine Fatherhood.

WE look back with loving remembrance to our first conscious acts of prayer. We think of the kind father who told us of our other Father above the blue sky: or of the time when we knelt at our mother's knee, and felt her soft hand hold ours, as she taught our child-lips to say, "Our Father which art in heaven." So, when the Church was in its infancy, the Saviour, acting towards His disciples as to "one whom his mother comforteth," taught that infant Church to pray. And now, in its maturity, that Church recalls the early lesson, and treasures those sweet words, and with no epithet so loves to approach God as with this: "Our Father which art in heaven."

"The invisible things of Him are clearly seen by the things that are made; even His eternal power and Godhead." But the heart yearns for more. In

our own nature there are emotions as well as thoughts. Our relationships and their instincts are more than what we possess or do. Of these none are stronger than the parental. Children know the treasure of a father's, a mother's tender affection, and the happiness of confiding to them every sorrow or desire; and parents know how musical is the voice of the loving child, and their delight to listen and help.

Can such feelings be shared by Deity? Not if He be a mere force; or if, being a Person, He is only calm thought and inexorable will. But why may I not regard Him as Father, if He is known by His works, the noblest of which is man made in His own image? Therefore, we may infer resemblance in the Divine nature to this fatherliness in human nature, which, though sin has defaced it, is yet so beautiful. God made His nature known in the man Christ Jesus. If man himself was made after the image of God—the Son of God manifested the Eternal Type from which man was originally moulded; so that Christ was the very Image of God, because perfect man. And God, incarnate in the Man, speaking to men who knew the tenderness of parental love and the trustful love of children, said: "When ye pray, say, *Father*"! Not "Creator," "Ruler," "Judge,"—He is all these;—but the idea of Him we are habitually to cherish assures us that our prayer will certainly be heard, for God Himself teaches us to call Him "Father."

In using a term adapted to our nature, God employs the exact term adapted to the model on which that

nature was framed; so that, instead of borrowing from human paternity, human paternity is only an imperfect copy of His own! How they err who deem they exalt the Divine Majesty by denying it such emotions as this term suggests; "who would make heaven clear by making it cold, and would assert the dignity of the Divine Essence by emptying it of its love, and reducing it into nothingness" (Maurice). Figures are not facts, but may mean much more. Earth's facts must be infinitely inferior to heaven's glories, yet may help us to conceive of them. A figure used by God is a gracious method to assist our infant powers to attain some faint idea of what exceeds all power of language. He who made the father's heart, and knows what is in man, adopts the title "Father," and bids us so address Him. Thus approaching, we recognise His power without trembling, and adore His holiness without shrinking; we can exult in all His perfections as children who share in His honour, and while bowing before Him with reverence may rejoice with confidence.

Atheism says that all things are the result of law that has no author, and forces that have no originator. Pantheism would confound God with His works, and blend the soul itself with Deity. Paganism represents Him as a Being whom it is necessary to placate by offerings, and whom we must approach with dread. Agnosticism has searched the universe and says, if such a Being exists, He hides Himself, unknown and unknowable. How blessed they who are as certain He is their Father as that He exists; who by faith see His face,

hear His voice, feel His hand and respond to His love; who coming forth anew from communion with Him are more sure of His Being than of that of any earthly friend! He is not to them an "Unknown God." The little child, shrinking timidly from every stranger, flies to its father's open arms. He may be gigantic in form and solemn in feature; and as he returns from field of toil or scene of strife, may be to others an object of fear; but his own little one, as father's step is heard on the threshold, runs to clasp his knee and be folded in his arms. And so the mighty God, before whom angels veil their faces, encourages us to run and welcome His advance, to trust Him, to love Him as "Our Father."

II.—Fatherhood by Creation.

Earthly parents are only links in the chain of dependent causation; but He who made all things is God. Whatever the methods, whether by a separate fiat creating each distinct species in its full maturity, or whether by slow process of evolution from lower forms, a Primal Originator there must be, adequate in power and wisdom to form a universe replete with evidences of strength and design. In all things we trace

> "The unambiguous footsteps of the God
> Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
> And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds.
> . . . . . .

> Nature is but a name for an effect,
> Whose cause is God. . . . Not a flower
> But shows some touch in freckle, streak, or stain,
> Of His unrivalled pencil."—COWPER.

Strange, that in an age of scientific discovery any should fail to recognise the Designer of works which, the better known, inspire the more admiration. Lord Bacon said he would rather believe all the fables of the Talmud or Koran, than that this universal frame of nature was without a God. Of all evidences, none are more impressive than those in man himself. Every advance in science demonstrates more clearly that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." Any single organ should suffice for proof: the hand, the foot, the ear, the eye; each fitted for special service; the marvellous mechanism within, for all functions necessary for life; the adaptation of these to each other; the intellectual and moral nature in harmony with the physical; and all with the external world;—so distinctly speak their Divine Original, that even heathen writers, as the poet quoted by St. Paul, confessed, "We are also His offspring." I see a portrait and admire the outline, the colouring, the character revealed in eye and mouth. I contemplate a statue, so perfect in its representation of the human form that the marble seems to breathe. Should any suggest that no painter had drawn skilful brush across that canvas, that no sculptor with cunning chisel had shaped that marble, but that both had come into existence without any personal agency, such a critic would be regarded either as a humorist or insane. And can I look on the human

artist possessing the life of which his productions only wear the semblance, and refuse to recognise in him the handiwork of the Divine Artist, the Father of men?

III.—Fatherhood by Redemption and Regeneration.

Although, as Creator, God is the Father of all men, yet, as "all men have sinned," they have forfeited the higher privileges of sonship. Our restoration was the object of the mission of Christ. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name." "God sent forth His Son, that we might receive the adoption of sons." "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," and receive "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The distinction is again clearly drawn by St. John: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God! Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." It was only to disciples Jesus said, "I ascend to my Father and your Father."

If, then, all men are children of God, they cannot be so in the same sense. It cannot therefore be scriptural to speak of the unregenerate as needing only to see and recognise a relationship already existing. Our Lord declared with solemn emphasis,

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." No one should be buoyed up with the false hope of being saved by virtue of relationship to the Father, while discarding His love and violating His laws.

May we not then appeal to sinners in *any* sense as His children? Even the prodigal, far from home and feeding on the husks of his own wickedness, still claimed the relationship, saying, "I will arise and go to *my father*." He knew that his father loved him still, but he could not obtain the allowance of even one of his father's "servants" if he remained away in guilty rebellion. So long he must expect nothing better than swine for company, and husks for food. There is a vital difference between the dutiful child at home and the rebellious profligate in self-chosen exile, although both may have one father. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Sinners are "lost" until they return to God: they are "dead" until by believing in Christ they live anew. God is still their Father, inasmuch as He created them, has provided a way for their return, and invites them home. "Return, ye backsliding children, saith the Lord." Sinners may be appealed to as having in God a Father who has not ceased to care for them, and who, if they return, will see them when far off, and welcome them home; so that none are excluded from the privilege of thus addressing the Most High: "Our Father which art in heaven."

IV.—Blessings involved in Fatherhood.

1. *Love.*—That "God is Love" is a grand revelation to the *intellect;* that God is "Father" is grander still, appealing to the *heart.* All pleas are blended in this one opening word—"*Father.*" Earthly parents love their children before those children love them, in spite of very inaccurate knowledge, feeble affection, imperfect obedience, and even rebellion; they love them unselfishly, hoping for nothing but the response of love, the value of any service by those children being the love that prompts it. So our Father loves us with all the love the word can suggest, and can do all that such love desires.

2. *Sustenance and Protection.*—An earthly parent provides for the child, which, in its early life, would otherwise perish. So our Father in heaven cares for us. "No good thing will He withhold." He who made us "knoweth our frame." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." He feeds the fowls of the air; much more His children. We never cease to need and experience our heavenly Father's care. In the person of Jesus He appealed to the heart of earthly fathers. If, though degenerate and selfish, they give their children the good things needed, how much more will the perfectly righteous and loving Father act in accordance with His name! If He gives the greater gift of His Spirit, whereby we say "Father," He will not deny those lesser gifts required for the body in which that Spirit dwells.

His omniscience keeps watch, His omnipotence shelters, His providence directs. "God is our refuge and strength; therefore will not we fear;" for this refuge is "*Our Father.*"

3. *Education and Discipline.*—No wise father neglects the educing of the faculties of his child. He will never allow mere fondness, the pleasure of the hour, to supersede the training needed for the long future of life. So our heavenly Father trains His children for His service and glory. He instructs them by His word and Spirit, and exercises them in all godliness. Like children at school, we sometimes question the utility and murmur at the difficulty of the lesson. Our Father seeks not merely our present comfort, but our permanent wellbeing. He is training us for immortality.

"The ills we see,
The mysteries of sorrow, deep and long,
The dark enigmas of permitted wrong,
Have all one key;
This strange sad world is but our Father's school,
All chance and change His love shall grandly overrule.

How sweet to know
The trials which we cannot comprehend
Have each their own divinely purposed end:
He traineth so
For higher learning, ever onward reaching
For fuller knowledge yet, and His own deeper teaching.

What though to-day
Thou canst not trace at all the hidden reason
For His strange dealings through the trial season,
Trust and obey.
In after life and light all shall be plain and clear."

—HAVERGAL.

Though reproof is painful to the parent even more than to the child, it would be unkind clemency and pernicious selfishness to withhold it. A child without discipline grows up to be a misery to itself and a plague to others. So, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" If even the "Captain of Salvation" was "made perfect through suffering," much more is it necessary for God, "in bringing many sons unto glory," to appoint for them the "tribulation that worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." Sorrows which He sends are among the "all things" that "work together for good;" and "are but the graver countenance of love."

4. *Consolation and Intercourse.*—What earthly comforter can be compared to a mother? Bearing her little one in her bosom, shielding it from the cold, supplying its wants from her own life-stream, soothing its griefs by her tender caresses and the gentle murmur of her voice, "dandling it on her knees," as the divinely-directed prophet graphically depicts; then, when grown older, entering into all its childish griefs and troubles, not despising them because trifles to her, but patiently listening and earnestly consoling, because to that little one those troubles are real and great: afterwards, when the child has become the man, so making his sorrows her own that the heart, locked up perhaps to all besides, can unburden itself on that bosom where in infancy it first found solace:

never wearied by the long enumeration of woes, and by what to others would be the tedious repetition of the same sad tale; cheerfully sharing the trouble even when there may be little hope of lightening it; never treating it with levity or indifference; advising, but at such a time never rebuking! Even when that child may have been the cause of her bitterest grief—when his troubles have come on him by his own folly or wickedness—when he has forsaken his childhood's home and scorned its love, yet, when he comes to her with a heart bursting with anguish, forgetting all his faults in the contemplation of his sorrows, and with undiminished tenderness folding him to her breast, wiping his tears, palliating his errors, pleading his cause—O how a mother comforteth! And God who inspired that maternal tenderness, and who gave the father's heart its pity, says, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him;" and, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." How fully assured may we be that the compassion of any earthly parent is surpassed by His who says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee." All this, and much more than this, was revealed by Him, who, as the Word, came to express and exhibit the tender compassion of "the God of all consolation," "Our Father."

A father does not treat his children as strangers or visitors, but is on terms of loving familiarity. They

are not kept at a distance, as courtiers by a stately monarch, but are "at home" with him. Even so we may draw near to God, not merely on stated occasions of solemn worship, but in our chamber, and amidst the varied toils, sorrows and joys of daily life. Not only may we bring to Him our greatest necessities and bitterest griefs, but all our little cares, purposes, hopes and fears, and know He loves to listen. "Casting all your care on Him, for He careth for you."

5. *Inheritance.*—A father's wish to lay up in store for his children may be carried to excess, so as to foster idleness. Many a rich heir has been ruined by wealth for which he did not work. And at the best, the inheritance bequeathed lasts but for a little while. But God provides "an inheritance that fadeth not away"—wealth which we could never secure by our own exertions, yet the hope of which stimulates to industry and makes us rich indeed. If we are "children, then heirs; heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ."

V.—Human Brotherhood in the Divine Fatherhood.—"Our."

The "Our" encourages me to say "My." I know God is willing to be Father to me because to all besides. I shall utterly despair if I am to establish a special personal plea. Assurance resulting from my own feelings might disappear with to-morrow's clouded sky. It is only as one amongst mankind that I can begin to call God "*my* Father." Because Christ is

the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," I put in my claim simply as a sinner. Because God is "*Our* Father," I claim Him as "*My* Father."

And now I recognise with new emphasis my relationship to others with whom I share the blessing. We are taught human brotherhood while appealing to the Divine fatherhood. In asking help for ourselves we are reminded of the succour we owe to one another. We cannot pray acceptably if we pray selfishly, nor truly call God "Father" unless we would call every man "brother." "Say, 'Our Father,' and prayer is intercession at once. Take your friend with you, your pastor, your Church, your people,—yea, your enemy too, and your slanderer,—and kneel with them, as one, in your own prayer and confession. So, at the very spring and fountainhead of your life, you will have cast in the salubrious tree which shall make every Marah of your converse sweetness" (Vaughan). Thus we share in the prayers of our brethren. What a blessed community of goods! This is indeed the "Communion of saints." All true prayers from filial hearts to "Our Father" bring ourselves into the tide of their benedictions, which help to bear us onward to God. "The most private prayer of the godly is a public good. Every believer has a share in all the prayers of all the rest; for he is a partner in every ship of that kind that sets to sea, and hath a portion of all their gainful voyages" (Leighton).

How delightful is the realizing of this fellowship when the household are gathered round the family

altar, and the voices of young and old blend as they invoke the common "Father"! o w impressive is it, when a ship's company—officers, seamen, passengers—one family, alike dependent on the care of Him who rides upon the storm, send up from the wide waste of waters this invocation—"Our Father"! And what more impressive part of any service in any congregation, however imposing or however simple the ceremonial, than the blending of the accents of rich and poor, ministers and people, in this first word!

This recognition of brotherhood should include all who invoke the one Father. The special interest we feel in "*Our* Church" should not exclude from our hearts those who, in other organizations and with other forms, call upon "Our Father." How often "Our *Credo* hath devoured our *Pater Noster*, and Faith hath shut Charity out of doors"! By whatever term distinguished, all congregations of believers belong to each; and each should regard as brethren "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." The Divine Head of the Church said, "Whosoever doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The great Apostle said, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."

This brotherhood in "*Our* Father" extends to the various conditions of social life. Rich and poor,

master and servant, queen and cottager, unite in the same confession, which should abate pride in the lofty and envy in the low. "This shows how far the equality reaches, for to all He hath given one nobility, having vouchsafed to be called Father of all alike" (Chrysostom). This is the only real equality, the true Christian Socialism; not a bringing down of any, but a levelling up of all into the relationship of sons of God. The writer can never forget the exclamation of a negro woman, amidst a congregation of recently emancipated slaves at Richmond, Virginia, to whom he had been preaching from the words, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted"—"When I feel de lub ob God in my heart, I knows I belong to de royal family ob heaven."

This word "Our" embraces nations. "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" The monopoly of Fatherhood by Jews, and the haughty disdain of others by Greeks were grandly rebuked by St. Paul on Mars Hill, when he told the Athenians that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." All nations are included in the law: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Recognition of this should influence the foreign policy of nations! There is but one law for individuals and communities. We do not cease to be under the law of love when our responsibility is shared in a committee, senate, or government. As all the inhabitants of the globe are lighted by the same sun in the course

of every twenty-four hours; so all men who pray this prayer, though, as regards nationality, station, and culture, at the antipodes of each other, fix their eyes upon the same Throne of Grace, and invoke the same Father. What a bond to our dissevered humanity is this word "Our"! It ignores conventional exclusiveness; overleaps sectarian barriers; disregards social distinctions; knows nothing of crowns and coronets, titles and decorations; disdains the boundaries of mountains and rivers; sets at naught varieties of hue and language; and sees only, springing from the one Fatherhood of God, the one Brotherhood of man. Thus the gospel, by drawing all men to the Father, draws all men to one another.

VI.—The Majesty of the Father.—"In Heaven."

"To make the pure, the immeasurable ether, exalted as it is above all the pollution and troubles, the mutability and limitations of this earth, the dwelling-place of the Divine Being, belongs to those spontaneous symbols which have a foundation in the consciousness of all mankind" (Tholuck). "Heaven" does not refer to some definite locality to which Deity is confined. "God is within all things, but is shut up in nothing; outside all things, but excluded from nothing; beneath all things, but not depressed under anything; above all things, but not lifted up out of the reach of anything" (Augustine). "Do not I fill heaven and earth?"

Christ's ascended body is beheld and worshipped by angels and saints. "Christ is entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," still revealing the Father. But we sorely miss the purpose of these words if we dwell on ideas of mere locality.

By this word we are taught that God is not a vague abstraction, or unknowable force, but an actual Personality, existing somewhere, distinct from ourselves. We look beyond this earth to the immeasurable regions above us. We soar beyond the clouds and the blue sky; beyond the sun, the planets, and the stars; and we believe that everywhere in that immensity is God our Father. His works we see, but He is not His works. Between Him and ourselves there are personal and distinct relations. We are His creatures, He is our Creator; we His children, He our Father; we on earth, He in heaven. Agnosticism would ignore God, as if non-seeing proved non-existence; Paganism bring Him down from the boundless heaven and limit Him to parts of this visible universe as God of the sun, or sea, or dry land. This word teaches that while we address Him on earth, He is still in heaven. We need not despair of finding Him because throned above; we need not wish to bring Him to earth and detain Him here, in order at all times to approach Him. In the person of His Son He satisfied the yearnings of the race that God should visit man; but in the Resurrection and Ascension we worship

the Incarnate One no longer in the cave of the Nativity nor on the cross of Calvary, but "on the right hand of the Majesty on high." We look for help to the sublimest heights of Divine glory, without despairing on account of the vast distance, for, though in heaven, He is our Father, and we on earth can hold filial intercourse with Him.

The term is suggestive of *Dignity.*—The measureless expanse helps us to the conception of infinity. The varying splendours of the sun, the moon, the countless stars, impress the mind with admiration and awe. "Thou hast set Thy glory above the heavens," and He is our Father. *Power.*—The rolling clouds, the thunder's peal, the revolution of the heavenly bodies by forces so stupendous, suggest Omnipotence. "The heavens declare the glory of God." "By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens." Our Father is on the seat of supreme dominion; above all circumstances, and can control them; stronger than all forces of nature, and directs them; mightier than all foes of His children; His Love moves the arm of Omnipotence. Our Father is in heaven, and therefore "mighty to save." *Knowledge.*—"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand." Our Father, who is in heaven, sees the secret purposes of all men; all we are, do, need; can never lose sight of His children, nor fail to listen to their cry; "for God seeth under the whole heaven." *Purity.*—The clearness of the atmosphere

is a fit emblem of the character of God—"dwelling in light which no man can approach unto." "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." None of our imperfections can for a moment overshadow Him whom angels adore, saying, "Holy, holy, holy!" *Mystery.*—The mysteries of space, the stars, meteors and comets, wind and weather—these suggest our ignorance of other departments of the Divine government. But order pervades the physical universe notwithstanding the mystery; and so we are sure that though "clouds and darkness are round about" our Father, yet "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." Heaven suggests *Constancy.*—Whatever the mystery, order and regularity are conspicuous with every advance of astronomical science. There is no hurrying and no delay. No efforts of man can interfere with the working of those forces, so sublime both in might and minuteness. And our Father is stedfast in His loving purposes. Because He is in heaven, like the unchanging stars, He abideth ever. "Our fathers, where are they?" —but "the Lord liveth;" for He is our "Father in heaven." *Nearness.*—However distant the utmost limit of the heavens, we are at their very threshold. Our littleness always touches the infinite that reaches beyond the stars. We feel its influences, we see its light in every part of the globe. If God is in the heavens, He is always near to us, and we and all mankind to Him, and therefore to one another in Him; and so we again are reminded of our Brother-

hood in the Fatherhood. Every tiny dewdrop sparkles with the sun's own light, and "in its little globe's extent frames its native element," and brings heaven down to earth. So each individual soul may appropriate the blessings of this heavenly relationship, and shine in the light of its native Home and Father, God. He is reflected in every filial heart. And as the dewdrop equally portrays the heavens, whether radiant from wayside hedge or castle-slope, so, wherever we may be and whatever our earthly station, we may shine in the light of God and rejoice in "heaven begun below." (Andrew Marvel.)

VII.—Practical Lessons.

1. *Filial Confidence.*—We should absolutely rely on the representation He gives of Himself. Bible-names express qualities: they are descriptions, not mere designations. As "Jehovah" means the *Self-existent;* and "Jesus" means *Saviour;* so "Father" is an assurance of what God actually is. He who cannot lie will prove Himself to be all He thus expresses, more than all we can conceive. We may therefore "come with boldness to the throne of grace," since He who sits there is "Our Father"! As "Our Father" He must desire to give us all that is good for us, and being "in heaven" He is able to fulfil all the yearnings of His fatherly heart. To those who can in faith say "Father," the Apostle says "All things are yours." "What will not the Father give

to sons seeking Him, who has already bestowed this—that they are His sons!" (Augustine). Never should we doubt the love that prompts, the power that executes, or the wisdom that directs.

It is related of three little children, that during a thunderstorm they were asked each to choose a favourite text. One selected "The Lord of glory thundereth," and being asked her reason, said, "I once heard a great noise when I thought I was all alone in the house; and I was so frightened, I screamed, and father's voice called out, *Don't be afraid, little Margie, it's only father.* And now when it thunders very loud, it always seems as if I heard God say, 'Don't be afraid, little Margie, it's only Father;' and I don't feel a bit frightened." With confidence a loving child tells everything to a loving parent. Joys and sorrows are alike poured forth to listening love. Does some unexpected pleasure present itself—does some danger threaten, or is pain felt,—the ready instinct is at once to tell father or mother, who will soothe the pain, protect from the peril, explain the difficulty, rejoice in the joy. "God's children in all their troubles should run to their heavenly Father as that sick child who cried, 'My head! my head!' So pour out thy complaints to God—'Father! my heart! my heart! my dead heart—quicken it! my hard heart—soften it in Christ's blood! Father, my heart! my heart!'" (Watson). So let our filial trust respond to His paternal love. O for more of the childlike intercourse which He invites!

O for more simplicity in prayer; more habitual, trustful, happy, all-embracing, nothing-withholding outpour of the heart to "Our Father"!

If an earthly parent loves such signs of affection, He who has given us the Spirit of adoption will never be deaf to this appeal. There are times when it is the only word we are able to utter. When we can only say "Father!" there may be more real prayer than in a whole liturgy. No imperfection in method will nullify its efficacy. An earthly parent never disdains the letter that breathes affection because blotted or misspelt. "What blottings are there in our holy things! Yet our Father in heaven accepts us. Saith God, 'He is my child; and he will do better.'" A prince might stand on ceremony and reject the petition incorrectly drawn up, but no child of God need fear that the imperfections of sincere appeals will ever hinder their entrance to the Father's heart.

No words can adequately set forth the blessedness of those who can thus call on God. They have a wealth beyond earth's arithmetic who look up from humblest hovel or stony pillow and say, My Father! However sick, theirs is a solace beyond all that medical skill or tenderest nursing or boundless stores can furnish. However unknown in the world, theirs is an honour no earthly prince could confer, in the lustre of which all the splendours of royalty pale. Paltry are the prizes some spend their lives to win, compared with the real nobility, the abiding peace of those who can say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

Does my cup flow over with gladness? I know who fills it. Nor less when it is mixed with woe. Amid the roaring of the winds and waves He says, "My child," and I respond, "My Father;" no less than when there is a great calm. His reproofs are blessings. His blows are boons. His withholdings are conferrings. He delays only to perpetuate. He impoverishes to enrich.

2. *Reverence.*—If the word "Father" gives confidence, the word "Heaven" teaches reverence. "O come let us worship and *bow down*, let us *kneel* before the Lord our Maker." The unfallen angels who need not say "Forgive us," veil their faces before Him. The Elders in the Revelation "fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne." Sinners on earth, though privileged to call Him "Father," should not be less reverential. They who learn more and more the meaning of this word, become increasingly humble. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit." How wonderful that God should have these two homes—"Eternity" and the "Contrite Spirit"! "The highest Heaven is the habitation of His glory: the humble heart hath the next honour: to be the habitation of His grace." And this reverence is not in spite of the confidence, but is caused by it. The more intimate we become with some person of eminent wisdom and goodness, the more we respect as well as love him; the more by nearness we are able to detect

faults, the more we become impressed with the absence of them. Familiarity, instead of breeding contempt, increases respect. Some parents are so tender and sympathetic that their children have no hesitation in opening their inmost hearts. This closeness of intimacy so reveals the character of those parents, that with growing love there is an ever-deepening reverence. When our Lord encouraged Thomas to handle Him and see, this condescension called forth the adoring homage: "My Lord, and my God!" The beloved disciple who was permitted to lean on the Saviour's breast was more than all the rest imbued with a sense of His Divine majesty, and left an enduring record of the homage He receives in heaven. St. Paul rejoiced in saying, "Abba, Father," but He said, "I bow my knees unto the Father, of whom the whole family in earth and heaven is named."

3. *Gratitude.*—"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" We "love Him, because He first loved us." The reason why we should "love the Lord our God with all our heart" is this—He is "Father." Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift! even Himself. What gratitude should be ours to Him who, having given Himself, will surely give us all things else!

4. *Resemblance.*—A child often reminds us of its parents by its features, manner, and tone of voice. So we should be "followers (imitators) of God as dear children." Much of a child's obedience is spontaneous.

He naturally conforms to the wishes of the parent, the usages of the home. And the more we cultivate filial communion with our Heavenly Father, breathe the atmosphere of His Presence and listen to His voice, the less shall we be alive to external and contrary influences; the more we shall reflect His image, echo His words, think His thoughts, and, as children, become "partakers of the Divine Nature." We are to be "perfect, even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect," by imitating the broad beneficence of Him who "maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good." We are to be peacemakers, and so obtain the fulfilment of the promise, "They shall be called the children of God." We should "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." We should, as children of a king, not degrade ourselves by stooping to anything unbecoming our high birth. We should set our affections on things above; "walk as children of light"; and "do always those things which are well-pleasing in His sight."

5. *Assurance.*—These filial characteristics constitute the best evidence of sharing the filial relationship. St. John said: "Let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." This cannot be a mere persuasion of our own minds. It is fanaticism to think all is right while the life is wrong. The Spirit so witnessing is "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," dear Father!

Do we thus cry to God? Do we in penitence say, "I will go to my Father"? Do we in submission say, "My Father, Thy will be done!"? This is our own spirit crying out; but it is inspired by the Spirit of adoption. Our own spirit expressing sonship responds to Him who is the Spirit of sonship, and who thus testifies within us that we are the children of God; not that we shall become so, but that we are so now. We need not wish to read our names in the Lamb's book of life; if "Abba, Father," is written on our hearts, *that* is the seal of the Spirit testifying that "Now are we the sons of God," because now, actually, we think of Him, and feel and act in reference to Him as to "Our Father."

6. *Hope.*—"If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." Children naturally claim what is their father's. They speak without presumption of his property as their own: "our garden," "our carriage," "our house;" and if God is our Father, all that is His belongs to every child of His, who may say, "All things are mine."

> "His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
> And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
> With a propriety that none can feel,
> But who, with filial confidence inspired,
> Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
> And smiling say, 'My Father made them all!'"

Therefore the heaven where our Father dwells is ours also. Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you: where I am, there ye shall be also." Amid the toils of the

way, let us think of the repose of that heaven toward which its God is guiding us. Jesus said, "I go to my Father and your Father." If He is ours, we also shall go to Him, in whose "presence there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

7. *Prayerfulness.* — In the new Law Courts in London there is a grand central hall out of which, all round it, are entrances to the chambers where various suits are tried. And so, having entered into the meaning of this appeal, "Our Father who art in heaven," we are provided with free access for the presentation of every petition. To fix the mind on God as our Father in heaven, is the best remedy for wandering thoughts and depressing doubts. We may well pray that such a Name may be hallowed; that the Kingdom of such a Monarch may come; that the will of such a Father may be done; we may with confidence ask daily bread, and forgiveness, and succour in temptation, and deliverance from evil, at the hands of a God who has taught us to call him "Father." "This is the golden thread on which all the precious fruits are strung" (Saphir). This is the key to every door in the prayer. This is everywhere a ladder up which our petitions may climb. We can always scale the skies with it. The whole prayer is condensed in its title—the "Our Father." This is a word easily uttered, but never fully known. "The Pater-Noster is not, as some fancy, the easiest of all devout utterances. It may be committed to memory quickly, but

it is slowly learnt by heart" (Maurice). It enfolds all the promises; it is the very gospel itself; it means pardon, reconciliation, favour, holiness, blessedness, heaven. If God's love shows us how great is our sin, His being a Father encourages us to seek forgiveness. We need not induce Him to be kind. He has not to be changed from an angry Ruler into a gracious Father. He is this already, and as such calls us home. However far we have wandered, "Thus saith the Lord, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears." "Christ says, When ye pray—when ye first begin to pray—when the thought first comes to you, I am not happy, I am not at peace, I am far from home,—say at once, without waiting for fitness, without raising the question of a satisfactory repentance, without investigating your 'evidences' whether of Christian faith or godly sorrow—begin by saying, 'Father,' begin by going straight home" (Vaughan). Return by the one and only way, Christ Jesus, who taught this prayer, died for our sins, and "makes intercession for the transgressors." Our response, "Abba, Father," brings us home. The black shadow of His displeasure rests only on the region of alienation; let us leave it by returning to God, and we are at once in the sunshine. Do we dread the thunderbolt of justice? let us come nearer to Him who holds out the golden sceptre of mercy. No soul of man desiring to live as a child of God need despair while this word "Father" is inscribed on His throne. No love is so comprehensive, tender, enduring. He is

in heaven, and "as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him."

"There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are so felt as up in Heaven:
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.
Oh, if our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives should be all sunshine,
In the sweetness of our Lord."

—FABER.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST PETITION.

"HALLOWED BE THY NAME."

I.—The Place of this Petition.

IT is remarkable that we commence our supplications with a prayer for God the All-sufficient, instead of for ourselves the all-dependent. It seems most natural to begin with our most pressing wants. Feeling our need of food to maintain life, our first prayer would be, "Give us bread." When conscious of guilt, a still more urgent need would be pardon. Yet we are taught to defer all petitions for ourselves till we have prayed to God for Himself—"Hallowed be Thy Name." Man's worship has been uniformly characterized by selfishness. We come to God either to thank Him for benefits received or to ask more: bread, raiment, health, safety, comfort. Like Jacob, we stipulate for "food to eat and raiment to put on." This is seen not only in the votaries of false systems, but in the majority of the prayers of professed Christians.

By the Lord's Prayer we are taught that the glory

of God should have the first place. We are not required to desire His glory in *opposition* to our own welfare, nor to be indifferent to it. In a warfare against Nature, success, if not a mere sham, would be temporary, because won by repression of God's own work in us. We do not hallow His Name by ignoring the nature He has given us. He does not ignore it Himself. "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things," and therefore we are divinely taught to pray for bread. Nor is it to be understood that no prayer is acceptable which the heart does not present in this order. Our Father has children of every age. He listens to the infant's cry as well as to the full-toned voices of those who already offer worship in harmony with that of cherubim before the throne. If "He heareth the ravens," He will listen when His hungry children say, "Give us bread," and when returning prodigals pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." But such prodigals, when at home again, grateful and glad, soon learn to say, "Hallowed be Thy Name." This will now be their *chief* desire. They do not cease, because at home, to feel their need of bread or of pardon. But above all is their delight in God, who not only gives both bread and pardon, but, as they now see, has given Himself; so that they rejoice in the Giver more than in His gifts, and seek His glory above their personal good.

"O Thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art, of all Thy gifts, Thyself the Crown.
Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor,
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."—COWPER.

When very young, the child first of all asks food and protection; but as it grows in enlightened love and in the fullest sense honours father and mother, its highest desire is not benefits to be obtained, but honour to be rendered. "Let my parents' interests be promoted, their character esteemed, their reputation vindicated. I am identified with them. Let them be honoured first: then, and not apart from this, care I to ask from them any benefit to myself." This is the true sentiment of even earthly sonship. And so it must be with those whom the Spirit of adoption enables to cry, "Abba, Father." As His child I glory in His greatness. O let that greatness be known and honoured. "Make mention that His Name is exalted." In calling Himself my Father, He has guaranteed to me all things. I need not hurry to bring petitions for myself to Him who, as Father, cares for me. The more He is glorified, the more my best desires are gratified. This will give me greatest confidence when I pray for myself, and make me willing to be denied my personal requests; for such denial will be for His glory, and therefore for my good. "Father, hallowed be Thy Name."

It may be said that such a prayer is unsuited for "babes in Christ." But are not many lessons given to a scholar which cannot be fully understood at once? Are not objects presented to the eye of the infant which a whole life of study will not enable him fully to appreciate? The first book of Euclid contains principles

capable of being developed in a way which the boy cannot even conjecture; yet, up to his capacity, he can study and delight in that which, to a mature mathematician, furnishes methods for measuring the heavens. The very words we employ in our simplest talk, and which are familiar to baby lips, have meanings which will gradually shine with clearer and intenser light. Yet those words must be used, though imperfectly understood. Thus our Divine Teacher has given us a perfect model, and though we imperfectly apprehend it, we may always be approaching nearer towards it. What are our most advanced attainments here, compared with those we hope for? The very A B C of the Christian religion contains mysteries at which we now can only guess. We speak, we understand as children, we know but in part. Yet we would not lose the imperfect vision because it comes so far short of the full perception when "we shall see face to face." Our Lord gave His infant Church, and gives each infant disciple, a lesson by which the very feeblest may profit, but which will present to expanding knowledge and increasing holiness ever new incentives to effort, and new treasures for enjoyment. The words grow to our apprehension with our own growth in grace, so that although as children we chiefly thought of daily bread, when "of full age" our desires go with our words when we give precedence to the petition, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

This precedence harmonizes with the older Revelation. As "the first and great commandment" was to

love the Lord God with all the heart, so the first and great petition is that the Name of God may be hallowed. As that commandment embraced all the rest, for "love is the fulfilling of the law;" so the hallowing the Name of God involves the coming of His kingdom in our hearts and the doing of His will; it involves also trust for bread, pardon, and deliverance. No citizen can be secure apart from the security of the Government: and this cannot be secure unless held in honour. True devotion and filial love desire chiefly the Divine glory: but this Divine homage is also human prudence, though when offering such homage we are not thinking of this. God alone can satisfy man. The world with all its vast resources was made for man; but man was made for God, in whose image he was created. The soul is a wanderer till it finds its true home with its Father. Then it possesses all the resources and security of home. To hallow the Name of God as Father is to possess Him who feeds, forgives, and saves. If the fountain is in honour, the streams cannot fail. If God is ours, "all things are ours." If we "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," He who gave us this prayer assures us that "all these things shall be added unto us." The place of this petition being thus so unlike what unassisted human reason would have given it, and yet so suited to the revelation of God as Father and so advantageous to ourselves, is one evidence of Divine authorship. Such a prayer Paganism never offered nor Philosophy suggested. It is "The Lord's Prayer."

II.—The Meaning of the Petition.

A name enables us to know an object. It may be simply a designation; it may be also a description. Bible names, especially those denoting Deity, are chiefly descriptive. The Name in this prayer which we ask may be hallowed, is "*Father.*" The infinitely Holy One cannot be made more holy. We pray that what is revealed of Him may be better known, and that the Name embodying such revelation may be more reverenced. We add no honour to His intrinsic excellence; but we may add to the honour we cherish towards Him, and may pray that this rendering "the honour due unto His Name" may become universal. God blesses *us* by increasing our bliss: we bless God by acknowledging perfections which are incapable of increase. "His *benedicere* is *benefacere*. He blesseth us really, as the Giver of blessedness itself; and our blessing Him is no other than the acknowledgment of this. He sanctifies us by His Spirit, and we sanctify His Name when we acknowledge that He is holy" (Leighton). The meaning of the prayer is, that God would so order events in His Providence, and so influence the minds of men by His Spirit, that His Nature as displayed in His Name may be universally revered.

The truths contained in this name "Father" had already been dimly revealed. When Moses said, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory," we read that "the Lord proclaimed the Name of the Lord."

The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth." In this Name are embodied righteousness that requires obedience to a holy law; and mercy to forgive all who repent. So in the Name prefixed to the prayer. "Heaven" tells of purity, law, power, purpose, to maintain righteousness: while "Father" tells of mercy not only to pardon rebels, but to receive them as children. If "Our Father in Heaven" is the Name which it was the great purpose of the Son to proclaim, no petition can be more important than the one which seeks that this Name may be understood and adored. The Name of God was proclaimed by all the works of creation, was hallowed at Sinai, in the Temple worship, by the lips of prophets, but chiefly by the Advent of Him who, as the "Word," came to reveal it. He said, "I am come in my Father's Name;" and "I have manifested Thy Name." He was Himself "God manifest in the flesh," and His whole life was a portraiture of the Invisible. The better we comprehend His combined purity and gentleness, holiness and compassion, the better we understand the meaning of the Name. Jesus is Himself the exponent of the Name of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

"O unexampled love,
Love nowhere to be found, less than Divine!
Hail, Son of God! Saviour of men! Thy Name
Shall be the copious matter of my song
Henceforth; and never shall my harp Thy praise
Forget, nor from Thy Father's praise disjoin."—MILTON.

III.—What is involved in this Petition.

1. *Honour to Jesus as revealing the Name of the Father.*—We read the name of Father in the light thrown on it by Christ, both in His words and in His life. We should not have known the Fatherhood in its fulness of glory if Jesus had not revealed it. "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "God hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." If then we would hallow the Name of the Father, we must hallow the Name of the Son as interpreting it. It has often been asked what there is in a name. "There is much, nay almost all, in names. What mystic influences does not a name send inwards, even to the centre, especially in those plastic first-times, when the whole soul is yet infantine, soft; and the invisible seed-grain will grow to be an all-overshadowing tree!" (Carlyle). A name has established a throne, maintained a dynasty, roused a nation's enthusiasm, turned the tide of battle, convulsed a continent, dictated a history. A name has been the charm of a life that would otherwise have been dark and dreary; it has roused to noble exertion, it has given perseverance in toil, courage in peril, solace in sorrow, and comfort in death. The name of the lover, husband, wife, how it has thrilled human hearts! The name of father, mother, brother, friend, what a talisman! In those plastic first-times of childhood,

what is the whole world compared with the name of "Father"! "Mother"! and how deep and abiding its influence through all the after-life!

And when the soul is new-born, when the eye that was blind first beholds the Redeemer, and the ear that was deaf first listens to His voice, how precious becomes the Name of Jesus! The heart is then again "infantine"; the Name thrills to its centre, and the seed-grain ceases not to grow till it becomes a great tree which overshadows, beautifies, enriches, gladdens the whole life. "Whatsoever" the believer does, "in word or deed," he does "all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." With this Name on his lips he approaches the throne of grace, relying on the promise: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do." In every assembly of Christians, at any time or place, it assures him of the real presence of his Lord, who said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." If "reproached for the Name of Christ," "happy" is he. This Name he publishes to the heathen abroad; with this Name he goes to the bedside of a dying sinner; this alone he utters as the symbol of salvation for prince or peasant, for philosopher or little child, because "there is none other Name under heaven wherein we must be saved." It is in and by this Name that the kingdom of God will come and the will of God be done on earth as in heaven, because "God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the

Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Thus the Name of the Father becomes hallowed to us by the Name of Jesus, through whom we know, approach and love Him. The multitudes of believers whose hearts have thrilled while their blended voices have celebrated this Name, have ever felt that in thus "confessing Christ as Lord" they were singing to the glory of God the Father!

> "Thy mighty Name salvation is,
> And keeps my happy soul above;
> Comfort it brings, and power and peace,
> And joy and everlasting love:
> To me, with Thy dear Name are given
> Pardon and holiness and heaven."—C. WESLEY.

2. *Appropriate thoughts of God.*—We pray that He may be known as being all that is implied in the Name: that all false notions of Him which have lured men to wickedness or driven them to despair, may give place to the understanding of the Name which represents Him to be the righteous Ruler and the tender Father in One: that so the true Light, the Divine Revealer of God, may enlighten the world; showing all men that they may take refuge in the Fatherhood of God; inviting all men to come home to the enjoyment of His love; and in hallowing the Name of the one Father, become united to each other as one brotherhood.

3. *Suitable emotions towards God.*—We pray that

the truths implied in the Name may be actually experienced; that as *Father*, He may be trusted and loved; that as *Heavenly*, He may be worshipped and obeyed; that as Holy, He may be admired and imitated; that instead of wishing His purity debased to suit our sinfulness, we may be lifted up into the region of that purity; that all men may acknowledge His kingdom and obey His will; that we who offer the petition may be more profoundly impressed with the majesty. holiness and love of God; that we may bow with reverence before His Infinite Glory, and cultivate a more reverential trust, a more unquestioning obedience.

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell;
> That mind and soul, according well,
> May make one music as before,
>
> But vaster. We are fools and slight;
> We mock Thee when we do not fear;
> But help Thy foolish ones to bear,
> Help Thy vain worlds to bear Thy light."—TENNYSON.

4. *Reverential use of the Name.*—This petition has sometimes been limited to a narrow literalism. It deprecates much more than profane language. Whenever we introduce the Divine Name in our speech uselessly and triflingly; when we employ it to turn a sentence or give emphasis to a statement or piquancy to an anecdote; when we make the Divine Word the subject-matter of joke, punning on solemn truths of Revelation, and quoting Scripture with ludicrous adaptations to provoke mirth; thus—and even when

we take this great Name on our lips in worship without any endeavour to feel the homage it demands—we violate the spirit of the prayer.

5. *Confession of the Name.*—Do not the people of God sometimes use it too little? When we express our joy in health, the comforts of life, the beauties of Nature, might we not hallow the Name by a grateful recognition? If we would not remain silent in case an earthly parent were spoken of with contempt, should we by silence seem to consent when the Name of our Heavenly Father is dishonoured? In public profession of discipleship we should hallow the Name. God has a chosen family who are called by the Name of His Son. They have "come out from the world," and are "a chosen generation, a peculiar (purchased) people." They are named after their Father: "In whom the whole family in earth and heaven is named." Every one who really and openly joins this family, helps to hallow the Name before the world.

The Church is God's great instrument for hallowing His Name. Those who believe are to "confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus." The question is not of belonging, by any special method, to some special denomination, but of confessing Christ in any society of believers, and so becoming an avowed member of the Church Universal. They who shrink from this and ostensibly remain outside the fold, surely fail, in this respect, to hallow the Name. In other times such confession cost liberty and life. The martyrs

who, rather than cast a little salt on the pagan altar, were thrown to the lions or roasted at the stake, hallowed the Name in the presence of all who witnessed or heard of their sufferings. In our own time, among heathen converts, tender women and mere boys and girls have gone to death singing the praises of the Name; and by so hallowing it, did more than by their lives to make it revered. Surely none who sincerely offer this prayer should withhold a confession of Christ under the plea of being "disciples secretly."

6. *Private and public worship of the Name.*—We hallow it in our own chamber when we "pray to our Father who is in secret": in domestic worship when we acknowledge Him as the Guardian and Sanctifier of the home: in public worship "when we assemble and meet together to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at His hands, and to set forth His most worthy praise," to the veneration of the world. Too often this purpose in worship is forgotten. We go to witness a ceremony, to enjoy music, to hear a sermon. Perhaps we excuse ourselves from attendance because of the "dull service," the "bad singing," the "poor preaching." It is desirable that there should never be occasion for such complaints. But we should not forget that public worship is for the honour of God as well as for our own benefit; and that in seeking the former we are sure to gain the latter. Whether or not the ear may be charmed by harmony, or the intellect by eloquence; even though our devotional taste may be offended, we

should not forget that we go to worship; to testify to an unbelieving world that we "believe in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord"; and that in such union with fellow-believers we hallow the sacred Name.

If we bear this in mind we shall not be indifferent to the outward expression of reverence. If, when invited to the house of one held in great honour, we take pains to be punctual, surely we should not by late arrival, and thus disturbing others, let it be supposed we are less respectful towards God. Prayer may ascend to Him as surely when we are walking by the way, sitting at our table, lying on our bed, as when prostrate in adoration; but when an attitude of reverence, being possible, is omitted, the effect may be injurious both to ourselves and others. There are few whose piety is of so exalted a nature, that when they "enter their closet and shut the door" to pray, they can feel as devout while lolling in an easy-chair as when, like Daniel, kneeling on their knees. Such worship will be likely to degenerate into lazy rumination, and then the pretence may as well be given up. We are in danger of ceasing to hallow the Name in our hearts when we disregard all outward expressions of reverence. And in public, the effect on others will be equally injurious. A stranger looking on when a congregation are uniting in worship will be impressed in proportion as the sincerity of the heart is shown in outward expression. If the demeanour of the worshippers is such as they would not dream of when

addressing any fellow-creature of rank, or even when addressing one another; if, while prayer or praise is being offered to God, they are looking about or lounging on their seats, though it is possible the heart may be devout in the sight of God, yet men cannot know it, and therefore cannot be impressed, as they otherwise might be, by the honour paid to God.

Tongues in the church of Corinth, though a miraculous gift, were, as the apostle taught, worthless without interpretation. And so, if reverence is not interpreted in demeanour, strangers cannot be favourably influenced, and God's Name is not hallowed in their minds. But if "the whole church be come together into one place, and all prophesy," or teach by evident signs of reverence, "and there come in one unlearned or unbelieving, he is reproved by all, he is judged by all; the secrets of his heart are made manifest," and, impressed by the evident earnestness of the worshippers, he may be himself led to reverence the Name, "and so he will fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed."

7. *Observance of special institutions.*—Baptism is ordained "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Whatever the view taken of the mode or the subjects, the ordinance itself should be honoured; nor is superstitious abuse any excuse for neglecting thus to hallow "the Name" of the Triune God. Still more important is this consideration in regard to the "Lord's Supper," which is

enjoined for our frequent observance. In this service we meet in the Name of its Founder; and "we show forth His death till He come." Besides all the spiritual good we may receive, we should observe this Sacrament as the most solemn of all methods of hallowing the Name. The Sabbath is emphatically "the Lord's day." We need not plead for Jewish interpretations, and bind heavy burdens on those to whom the gospel has brought freedom. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." But *it was made* for man; for man therein to hallow the Name. It is the day of the Lord's resurrection, and so of the believer's hope. From the first, His followers have met on this day to worship Him. The observance of this day is one great mark of Christian profession. The world ignores it except for pleasure, and denies its sacredness. Let those who offer this prayer observe it as linked with the Name they adore; let their children, domestics, workpeople, friends and neighbours know that, without dictating to others, they, as Christians, hallow it; and so hallow the Name it bears.

8. *Subjection to the Name.* — "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity." Otherwise we practically show that we ourselves do not reverence it, and we thus hinder others from doing so. But when unbelievers see men of like passions with themselves, living holy lives in the midst of temptations to sin, they may consider that there must be some power above the world to account for these

results. Purity amidst allurements to vice, temperance amidst incentives to excess, patience under provocation, persevering kindness to the ungrateful or hostile, blessings given in exchange for curses and boons for blows, resignation amid grievous sorrows, self-sacrificing labours for others—such fruits of godliness have often induced the careless, and even the profane, to reverence the Name in which such features of character have been exhibited and such works of benevolence have been done. As the Jewish rulers, "beholding the man which was healed standing with them, could say nothing against it," so moral cures of the spiritually diseased have been the most convincing arguments in favour of the Name in which they are wrought. "Many believed on Him when they saw the miracles which He did."

The writer recently heard a missionary relate how a notoriously wicked Chinaman had been converted by the simple message of the gospel. From being infamous for every kind of wickedness, he became a consistent Christian. After some months' instruction and oversight, he went back by his own desire to his native village. So marvellous was the change in his conduct, that many of his former acquaintances took a journey to the mission-station to investigate the cause, and the result was the conversion of nearly the whole of that village. In every land, men turned from the power of Satan to God are living evidences of the might of the Name. Opponents, loud in logical disputation, are hushed when they "behold the man

that was healed." When believers are "living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men," all men are the more likely to revere Him whose epistles they profess to be, and the more rapid is the advance of the day when "in the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow."

9. *Making known the Name.*—If we sincerely ask God to cause the Name to be hallowed, we profess that we are willing to exert ourselves in the use of means for that purpose. But how shall men hallow a Name of which "they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher"?

It is a prayer that atheists may bow before the Creator; that pagans may worship the true God; that the superstitious may without terror adore the Father; that all who are living in practical ungodliness may respond to His love and revere His laws. The Macedonians are said to have carried round in procession, once a year, a jewelled picture of Alexander, that the beholders might be reminded of his fame. So in this petition let us every day be reminded of the power, holiness, love, of our Father in Heaven; that we ourselves may adore Him, and that others may become illustrations of the promise, "From the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my Name is great among the Gentiles."

IV.—Reasons for Offering this Petition.

1. *The welfare of the world.*—The character of a nation must be influenced by that of the God they

worship, even more than by that of the men they honour. A people bestowing their chief admiration on warriors, will be warlike; on philanthropists, will be philanthropic. This will especially be the case in connection with the highest of all honours, Divine worship. Pagans have always reflected the character of their gods by cruelty, lust, revenge. If the only true God, revealed to us as our Father in Heaven, is known as He really is, in that proportion will the world which hallows His Name become righteous, pure and merciful.

2. *For the good of ourselves.*—In a still greater degree this effect will be produced on those who offer the prayer. If I habitually ask that God's Name may be hallowed, His attributes of holiness and love are constantly before me, and must influence me. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Living in the light of God by habitually praying that His Name may be hallowed, we must ourselves reflect that light. "We, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." This will promote happiness. There is no joy more pure and profound than that which is produced by the revelation of God to the soul. "Thy Name is like ointment poured forth." "Let them that love Thy Name be joyful in Thee." To know God as our Father is salvation. We may well wrestle in prayer "till the breaking of the day" to obtain it. A holy boldness is amply justified when we ask, "Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy Name. I

will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." We are blessed indeed when this Name is revealed by the Holy Ghost. Any place, any occasion of such manifestation we may designate Peniel, "for we have seen God face to face." Then indeed the night-shadows flee, the day breaks, and we may go on our way rejoicing.

"The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever." Glorifying and enjoying are inseparable. The more we place God first, the greater will be our joy. No one ever found happiness in seeking it as a direct object. A resolution to be happy on any one day is almost sure to defeat its purpose. We are most happy when we lose sight of self in cherishing some lofty idea, in pursuing some worthy object, in promoting the honour, welfare and happiness of others. There can be no higher aim in life than hallowing the Name of God. The apostles, when scourged, "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for His Name." They were thus followers of Him who was the supreme example of the prayer He taught. Enduring and anticipating crushing agony, He exclaimed, "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour! but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name." This was His consolation: "I have glorified Thee on the earth." Let this sublime desire possess the soul, and a thousand petty cares about ourselves will vanish. Whatever becomes of our property, health, comforts, reputation, life, only let God be glorified, let Jesus Christ be praised, and our chief

desire is fulfilled. How such a master-passion elevates the lowliest, enriches the poorest, gladdens the saddest! We shall never ask the question "Is life worth living?" if we value life chiefly as giving opportunities to glorify God, and if at all times from the heart we pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

3. *For the glory of God.*—Earthly honours are often given to men whose great titles accentuate their own littleness. The Divine perfections infinitely transcend all our praise. We can never adequately "give unto God the glory due unto His Name." We should honour men because they deserve it, not that we may share it. Let us by the Spirit of adoption rise to this higher level of prayer: asking God not merely to bestow some benefit, but to promote His own honour; praising Him not merely for what He gives, but for what He is. "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty."

Thus we shall become "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," whose glory is to hallow His Name. Many of the prayers we offer now will be unheard then. No longer shall we need bread for the mortal body, or pardon for the guilty soul; but we shall never cease to desire that the Name of God may be hallowed. This is the all-comprehensive employment, the supreme consummation of bliss. Cherubim and seraphim "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." The

noble army of martyrs sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb: "Great and marvellous are Thy works, O Lord God the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the ages; who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name?" The innumerable hosts of the redeemed unite with "the many angels round about the throne, saying with a great voice, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." "Hallowed be Thy Name" is earth's response to heaven—echo of the Hallelujah Chorus of the skies. By it we take our part in the liturgy of the celestial temple. "Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; glory be to Thee, O Lord most High."

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND PETITION.

"THY KINGDOM COME."

"THREE weighty, instructive, monitory words. The first, 'Thy,' lifts the thoughts upward; bids us think of God, and lose ourselves in Him. The second, 'Kingdom,' reminds us of a great system in which to have a place is glory, for which to be allowed to pray is the highest honour and the highest dignity of the creature. The third, 'Come,' bids us exercise this honour at once. As we utter the petition, we are putting the hand to a work which is all God's, we are claiming a franchise and a citizenship and a priesthood, not of earth but of heaven" (Vaughan).

I.—The Kingdom of God Spiritual.

The "Kingdom of God" refers to His authority in this world; and its meaning is further unfolded in the next petition,—"Thy will be done on earth." The coming of the Kingdom is the progressive recognition of this rule until all mankind shall either willingly accept it or unwillingly submit to it. In material

nature the Kingdom has already come, has never ceased to be. It is the moral government of God for the triumph of which we pray; His rule in the region of mind, heart, and will; the establishment of His authority where it has been ignored and resisted; the final victory of God's righteousness and love over every form of wrong and hate; His reign on earth.

Once this reign was undisputed. But there were angels who "kept not their first estate." Yielding to their malign influence, man also revolted. But still the kingdom was not subverted. Satan disturbed but never supplanted it. He is not lord of men or the world, and is king only by usurpation. God has never ceased to be the rightful and actual Ruler, though His authority has been defied. In the rewards and penalties of physical and social laws He has given indications of His moral rule and foreshadowings of His future judgment. In every land He has had His witnesses, in every conscience His vicegerent. From eternity it was in the Divine purpose to cure man's revolt and overrule its evil for still greater good. Man had now to be dealt with no longer as a loyal subject, but as a guilty rebel. Pardon was to be offered consistently with righteousness, and moral means instituted to bring man's moral nature into harmony with the Divine Kingdom. Thus the Kingdom was no longer one of mere rule and obedience, but of mercy to the disobedient. In relation to fallen man it is a Kingdom of grace. A Kingdom still; asserting the supremacy of God and the sanctity of

law; but providing pardon for the transgressor, and help for his recovery. The foundations of it were laid from the beginning. It was proclaimed when man sinned. As years rolled on, its principles and claims were more fully developed. By Enoch, Noah, Abraham; by Moses on Sinai, by the ceremonial law, by the trumpet-notes of prophets, by the harp-songs of psalmists, its majesty was asserted and its triumph foretold. Solomon prayed for it—"Give the king Thy judgments, O God; and let the whole earth be filled with His glory." Isaiah exulted in beholding afar off the day "when the government shall be upon His shoulder," when men shall no longer "hurt nor destroy, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." As among heathen nations there was an expectation of the coming of some great benefactor and ruler of men, it is no wonder that with such Divine promises the Jews were expecting their long-predicted Messiah, and listened eagerly to the clarion blast of the Baptist, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Thus heralded, Jesus began His ministry as its special Ambassador, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe in the gospel." The Kingdom, long expected, portrayed on the glowing canvas of prophets, extolled by the inspired rapture of poets, prepared for by a long series of providential arrangements, was now proclaimed, and all men were summoned to submit to Jehovah and His Christ.

But the Jews mistook its nature. They expected

a warlike monarch who would deliver them from the Romans, and establish a worldly kingdom which should more than reproduce all the glories of David and Solomon. There was nothing in our Lord's teaching to encourage such an idea. The blessedness He announced was not that of successful ambition, of splendid kingly courts, but of "the poor in spirit": not of those who can compel compliance with human laws, but of those who are "persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven." When the disciples disputed which of them should be greatest, their Lord taught that unless such notions were laid aside, they could have no part in it. "Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven." Not outward grandeur, but inward renovation was the qualification: "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Instead of wealth being essential for securing it, He taught "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." Not self-indulgence was to be expected, but self-sacrifice: "It is good for thee to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell."

The oft-repeated preface to parables explaining its nature, "The Kingdom of heaven is like unto," was followed by no description of worldly thrones, with armies, pageantry, and pomp. It was a Kingdom of quiet growth from the smallest to the greatest, like a grain of mustard seed; of silent influence, like leaven

in meal; of unseen yet priceless treasure, which to purchase, men might well renounce all worldly wealth. "The mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven" were illustrated by the various kinds of soil on which the good seed fell: its highest rewards are not for successful fighters, but for those who "hear the word and understand it, and bear fruit." Thus when the Pharisees asked "when the Kingdom of God should come," He replied, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation." It is not to be known by the outward signs of this world's kingdoms. "Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you," or *in the midst of you.* It had already appeared, but was not perceived by their worldly minds. When accused by them of doing the very thing they wanted Him to do, His refusal to do which so exasperated them, He replied to Pilate, "My Kingdom is not of this world: if my Kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my Kingdom not from hence." Developing such instruction, the apostles proclaimed the Kingdom as one of spiritual virtues, not of outward forms; "the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost;" a Kingdom to be entered not by a career of worldly triumph, but of patient suffering: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God."

We are thus taught that the Kingdom of God signifies His rule in the hearts of men, a rule based on eternal righteousness, not destroyed though assailed

by man's sin, asserted in man's moral nature, vindicated and its final triumph predicted by inspired prophets, proclaimed by Christ, sealed by His blood, attested by the Resurrection, ratified by the Ascension, confirmed at Pentecost, published to the world by the apostles, illustrated in the character and conduct of every believer born again as a subject of it. The Church is its embodied witness; the Word its authorized code; Christian fellowship and the sacraments its outward and visible signs; holiness its test of loyalty. This Kingdom is to grow till Christ Himself shall return with power and great glory to vindicate His authority, to give victory to His faithful ones, to overwhelm incorrigible rebels, to perfect His Church. Then the gospel of love shall universally prevail over every form of ignorance, wrong and misery; and the glad chorus break forth, "The kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

II.—Essential Difference between the Kingdom of God and kingdoms of the World.

The rule of God essentially differs from worldly monarchies. Disregard of this has hindered the progress of the Kingdom; real strength having been exchanged for external show, inward purity for outward pomp, spiritual freedom for worldly bondage, and self-denying zeal for false security and dignified repose. Let us consider some of these differences.

1. *The Ruler.*—In an earthly kingdom the ruler may be selfish, proud, tyrannical, contemptible. But the Head of this kingdom is the Infinitely Holy and Good. Man's autocracy, owing to faults from which even the very best are not free, is generally to be dreaded. It is the glory of this Kingdom that the will of the Sovereign is supreme. Every invasion of His authority, every attempt to share it, is injurious to the subjects. Earthly kings reign through delegated officers; here, God rules personally in every soul. Earthly rulers have power only where they are present; but this King is in every place and searches every heart. Earthly rulers can only control the conduct, but this King reigns over the thoughts, affections, and will.

2. *The laws.*—Earthly laws insist on obedience and inflict penalties; but God's kingdom is a rule of grace. What kingdom of this world could proclaim pardon to all transgressors? What judge could commence an assize with offering to acquit all criminals pleading guilty? But this Kingdom restores rebels to allegiance by first forgiving them, even the ringleaders. The rulers of this world must be content with the observance of the letter of the law; but this Kingdom secures a homage which scorns such limitation, arouses a loyalty which cannot be restrained in its expression, creates an enthusiasm which no mere code can satisfy. And the wonder is that by this very proclamation of pardon it secures this fervour of obedience; by this Grace it vindicates Law.

3. *The subjects.*—Earthly kingdoms claim all who dwell within territorial limits. A river, a chain of hills, an imaginary line, may determine the question who are the subjects of its rule. But in this Kingdom all are enrolled who voluntarily submit to it, and none else. Within the same township, the same household, may dwell those who, while members of the same nationality, are on opposite sides in relation to the Kingdom of heaven. Relation to earthly rule is not altered by surrender to Christ. No prince nor republic need be jealous of this Kingdom nor alarmed at its progress. Monarchs lose no subjects by enrolment here. There cannot be such a thing as a Christian *country* or a Christian *nation*, except so far as the individuals who compose it are members of Christ. The locality of birth constitutes no one a citizen of the heavenly Kingdom. The rule of God extends wherever a heart yields its homage, and includes no heart not thus surrendered.

4. *The objects.*—Earthly kingdoms levy taxes to maintain their regal state, to defend or extend their territory, and to protect their subjects. The object of the Kingdom of God is to win hearts to the Father in Heaven, to instil love for righteousness, to cultivate spiritual worship, to promote the Divine glory and prepare for the perfected Kingdom on earth and in heaven. Who ever heard of an earthly kingdom making its object the prosperity of other nations? But the Kingdom of God seeks the happiness of all mankind, irrespective of territory

or race, by reconciling all to God and so to each other.

5. *The methods.*—Earthly kingdoms are based on force, apart from the option of individuals. The soldier is in the rear of the tax-collector. Opposition is punished by confiscation, exile, imprisonment, or death. Attacks from without are met by armies prepared to slaughter tens of thousands rather than surrender one acre of land. Extension of domain is often sought by violence, under pretext of civilization, commerce, and even religion. But this Kingdom is upheld by spiritual agencies alone; truth enlightening the conscience, love constraining the heart. To resort to bribery, whether the vulgar bait of money or the more refined allurements of fashion, status, and worldly dignities, may multiply professed adherents, but cannot extend a Kingdom which scorns all allegiance but the spontaneous homage of the heart. Torturing the body to secure the affections is a contradiction. Our Lord said that if His Kingdom were of this world, His servants would do what every earthly government must be prepared to do for its preservation. But "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;" and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Such a Kingdom wages no warfare but of truth, wields no sword but that of the Spirit, scorns all homage but that of love. Can it stoop to imitate the ambitions of earthly courts, the rivalries of worldly kings? Can it condescend to ask

alms from governments, to invoke the patronage of parliaments, by surrendering any of its heavenly prerogatives? Can it fetter its freedom by chains which crafty politicians have forged for their own purposes, and hug them because those chains are gold? Can it limit its own internal freedom by imposing a yoke on itself which its Lord never sanctioned, crippling its activities under the plea of order, and restricting the limits of that which is for all classes and climes? Shall it become an institution only for this or that class, instead of realizing its Divine ideal, a Kingdom for rich and poor, learned and unlearned, princes and peasants, Englishman and Hottentot, bond and free?

It is a question of great importance as regards loyalty to its Divine Head and its spiritual interests, how far help can be accepted from political governments consistently with the scriptural idea of the Kingdom. May pecuniary aid be furnished from funds which rely on compulsion, to support a religion based on willinghood? How far, in return for the supposed stability and dignity of the Church, is it right to surrender the Church's liberty under its heavenly Lord, so as to suffer the State to authorize its creed, regulate its worship, and appoint its ministers? On this question many sincere subjects of the Kingdom hold varying views. Each may give honour to others' conscientiousness, while lamenting the supposed ignorance or prejudice which causes difference of opinion. But on the great fundamental

truth of the spiritual nature of the Kingdom there should be no difference.

6. *The extent.*—Other monarchies perish, "Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?" But this Kingdom shall widen and strengthen till the twilight of its dawn shall have developed into the glory of the perfect day, and God shall be all and in all. We have received "a Kingdom which cannot be moved." His people shall fear Him "as long as the sun and the moon endure, throughout all generations: His Name shall endure for ever, and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed." In contemplation of the rule of this King, shall not "prayer be made for Him continually"? Shall not the Church without intermission send up this heaven-taught petition—"Thy Kingdom come"?

III.—The Coming of this Kingdom.

Truly to offer this prayer is evidence that the Kingdom has already come in the heart of him that utters it. It increasingly comes as the moral nature yields to its sway. It comes to the intellect as we better understand its laws, to the conscience as we more readily approve them, to the will as we more resolutely respond to them, to the heart as we more ardently love them, to the life as we more loyally conform to them. The King has been proclaimed in the citadel of man's soul, but in many by-ways, courts, and alleys His authority is not yet supreme.

"You who have received this Kingdom need to wish the coming of it in further degrees. Find you not many rebels yet unsubdued? They who search their own hearts often complain of them to their King. O such swarms of lusts, and unruly, irregular desires! When shall they all be brought into subjection?" (Leighton).

The prayer naturally expands from the individual to all who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." In the Church, as a whole and in each portion of it, we pray that God, in Christ, may rule. It is reasonable that every Christian should be chiefly concerned for the prosperity of the particular society which is the sphere of his own personal activity. He who is not in earnest for the interests of his own church is not likely to be so for the Church universal. And this prosperity consists not in circumstances which to the worldly view are most impressive, such as royal patronage, legal status, numbers, wealth, influence; good music, an ornate ritual, eloquent preaching; there may be these without the Kingdom. The Kingdom comes to a church when the preacher exhibits not himself but Christ, teaches not human theories but revealed truth, turns men "from darkness to light"; and "feeds the flock of God." It comes when there is spirituality of worship; when hearts go up to God in earnest desire and grateful praise; when "they who name the Name of Christ depart from iniquity"; when sinners ask, "What must I do to be saved?" and, having believed in the heart,

"confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus Christ"; when the real Presence of the King is revealed at sermon and sacrament, at prayer-meeting and mission-service; when spiritual life produces zeal in teaching the ignorant, tending the sick, succouring the needy, reclaiming the lost, "doing good unto all men."

Such coming of the Kingdom will necessarily promote its coming to the universal Church. When we find ourselves praying and labouring for "*Our* Church" rather than for "*Thy* Kingdom," we are not praying "after this manner." It is so much easier to pray for ourselves than for Him, chiefly seeking our own exaltation: *my* system, *my* methods, *my* church. If in battle one regiment were to seek exclusively its own renown, breaking its line of connection, and indifferent to the progress of the fight elsewhere, such valour might prove a hindrance rather than a help to the whole army. Rivalries of churches, frivolous controversies, sectarian jealousies, must needs be reproved by earnest prayer for the Kingdom of God. This is a prayer for all Christian missions. We pray that the Kingdom may come to God's ancient people; to Romanists, who have disguised and distorted it; to nominal Christians, as well as to gross idolaters; and to all, of whatever religion or of none, who know not God as "our Father." Under the influence of this Kingdom, laws will become more humane, rulers more righteous, the customs of society more pure, nations more pacific. Wealth will be less unequally distributed; the rich will care more for the poor, the

poor will envy less the rich, and every subject of the Kingdom will gladly admit that he is his brother's keeper. As Christ healed as well as taught, so, with the growth of His spiritual reign, the hungry will be better fed, disease more skilfully treated, the laws of Nature better known and obeyed, education more widely spread, and all evil more controlled by Him who "came to destroy the works of the devil." We need not dissociate ourselves from the interests of earth while praying for the Kingdom of heaven. "The lofty expressions of contempt for the littleness of mere earthly transactions which some divines affect, are not learnt in His school, or in the schools of His prophets. The Kingdom of God begins within, but is to make itself manifest without. At last it is to penetrate our whole social existence, to mould all things according to its laws. For this we pray when we say, 'Thy Kingdom come.' We pray for the overthrow of all tyranny, whether in particular men or in multitudes; for the removal of all corruptions; for truth in all departments of government, art, science; for right dealings in the commonest transactions of trade; for blessings that shall be felt in every hovel. If God had not heard this prayer going up from tens of thousands in all ages, the earth would have been a den of robbers" (Maurice).

IV.—The Millennial Reign.

By what means will this be accomplished? Many consider those in operation will suffice, with a fuller

outpouring of the Spirit. Let the Church pray more earnestly for a blessing on existing methods, and the Kingdom will extend until all shall know the Lord, "from the least unto the greatest." Then, after a millennium of such reign, Christ will come for the final judgment, and take His saints to His Kingdom in the heavens. Why should we doubt the efficiency of God's Word and Spirit to convert and sanctify the soul? Have they not triumphed over the worst forms of sin? Have not the most degraded been raised to sit in heavenly places; persecutors become apostles; revolting sensualists and criminals made new creatures in Christ Jesus? Agencies thus effectual in a thousand instances might be equally so in a thousand millions. Such a coming of the Kingdom would involve no change of dispensation, and would not seem to disparage agencies divinely appointed. It would be in harmony with the spiritual nature of the Kingdom, involve no interference with political governments, and not look like a return to the Church's childhood.

There is surely much to encourage our hopes. Within the last fifty years, into how many languages has the Bible been translated—how many missionaries have been sent forth—in how many lands already have the idols been utterly abolished—how many tens of thousands, recently sunk in lowest barbarism, revelling in vice and bloodshed, are now sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right mind! In our own land there were never so many faithful

preachers, so many devout worshippers, so much evangelistic zeal. Christianity by its indirect influence has humanized our laws, liberated the slave, and mitigated the horrors of war. If such advance during the last fifty years, what may it not be during the next five hundred? Suppose the existing Church were to become fully alive to its responsibilities; every individual claiming his share in the crusade against sin; every believer acting as a member of its "Royal Priesthood"—would the conversion of the whole world seem hopeless? Limiting the present number of real Christians to half a million, and supposing that each led one other soul to Christ every year, in eleven years there would be one thousand and twenty-four millions of subjects of this Kingdom, exclusive of infants, and the Kingdom would have come to the whole human race. This cannot be without the special help of the Holy Spirit; but if the Church prayed more earnestly, would not the Spirit work more effectually? If, as some think, the actual appearing of Christ in person is needed to win the human family to God, may it not be urged that a special outpouring of the Holy Ghost would produce the same results? May not Christ be expected to come in the power of His Spirit no less than in the manifestation of His Person?

But many are discouraged. After nearly nineteen centuries of witness-bearing, the Church has secured only a small part of the earth, even nominally, for Christ. How few the converts in proportion to the hundreds of millions unreached! Look at Christendom:

can we think the Kingdom of God has come in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Russia, in more than exceptional cases? Are not superstition on the one hand and atheism on the other in the ascendant? Have we not within our own time witnessed a series of wars between "Christian" nations, rivalling in slaughter those of Paganism? Are not millions of men under so-called Christian governments daily being trained for mutual slaughter, and the people oppressed to provide the cost of enormous armaments, even in times of peace? Do not frivolity and licentiousness run riot; and are not the stage and the press largely prostituted to the demoralization of the people? In our own land a vast portion of the population never enter a place of worship; and of those who do, the number is very small who profess personal subjection to Christ. Is not the increase of conversions less than that of the population, so that relatively the Kingdom is receding? Even from such professors a large deduction must be made. Within the Church, how much looseness of doctrine, fickleness of faith, conformity to the world, inconsistency of conduct, covetousness and self-indulgence; ambition, pride, contention, jealousy! How much flattery or fear of some, how much despising or patronizing of others; mere outward show or undisguised indifference, formal ceremonial or dead informalism; sectarian exclusiveness, ecclesiastical assumption, bitter controversy, intolerant judgment, and want of charity!

Can we be surprised at the slight influence of the

Church on the world outside? Alas for much of the current literature!—science perverted to disprove the existence of the Creator whose works she explores; fiction degraded to stimulate the passions by portraitures of vice; daily journals crowding their columns with demoralizing news, while almost ignoring the work of the Christian and the philanthropist; and even periodicals designated religious, and provided ostensibly for Sunday reading, increasing their attractiveness and sale by trashy and sensational tales, far less wholesome for the young than many standard books which would be condemned as too secular for the Lord's day. Few popular amusements are remunerative except those which attract by indecency of dress, immodesty of demeanour, and the representation of what is either frivolous or immoral, which some parents take their children to see and hear. Licentiousness unblushingly parades our streets. Intemperance has its temples at every corner, numbers its votaries by hundreds of thousands, boasts a revenue of more than a hundred millions of pounds, and has an annual death-roll of tens of thousands of souls. In the region of trade, of politics, of fashion, in the manners of all classes, how much there is totally opposed to the Kingdom of God! Who can examine into the condition of the multitude of the poorer classes without sadness—the hovels where many of our agricultural and urban labourers exist, filth and crowding illustrating an evolution downward into the brute; the dull routine toil of the factory, amid dust and heat

and foul air; the dismal perilous labour of the mine; the protracted health-sapping hours in shops and warehouses; the starving wages of the needle-woman; the teeming lodging-houses of the city, whole families crowded into a single narrow room; the gin-palace producing poverty, and poverty seeking to relieve its wretchedness in the gin-palace and the low music-hall; the multitude of sick and poor starving and dying; while wealth and pomp in ever-increasing ratio are stimulating luxury and licentiousness not only in the palaces of the great, but in the dwellings of the middle classes, who imitate and emulate the self-indulgence of many in higher grades;—can we see all this without lamenting how far, how very far we are from that condition of our world we are all hoping for, and how little progress we seem to be making towards it with the means now possessed? For this is in a land where, above all others, Christian agencies are in full operation. Suppose India were equally evangelized, Christian congregations being gathered in every city and every village, could we hope that the people at large would be more in subjection to the Kingdom than in our own land? And if not, the Church would be there a little sanctuary for the few rather than the Kingdom for all; a witness-bearer rather than a saviour.

With such thoughts it is not surprising that many are expecting a different and more powerful agency than any now in operation, even the "glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." In

the visions of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's image was cast down by the stone cut out without hands which "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Dan. ii., vii.). From the prophecy of Zechariah (ch. xiv.) it is inferred that a great reaction against Christianity will be overcome by the personal Advent of Christ, whose punishment of the ungodly will be a preliminary judgment, to be followed by a long period of loyal obedience to the King, when on all nations "Holiness" shall be inscribed.

The last and greatest of the prophets presents to us a vision of similar import. A warrior appeared whose eyes were as a flame of fire, and "on His head were many crowns, . . . and His name is called The Word of God, . . . KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." A mighty host of foes "made war against Him," and were overcome; "and His saints lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," when Christ "shall have dominion from sea to sea," and "all nations shall call Him blessed" (Rev. xix.–xxii.).

Our Lord frequently spoke of His coming again in connection with the final judgment (Matt. xxv. 31–46, xvi. 27, xxvi. 64; Mark viii. 38; Acts xvii. 31; 2 Cor. v. 10, 11; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17; 2 Thess. i. 6 9; 2 Tim. iv. 1, 8; 1 Pet. iv. 5). Our Lord and the apostles spoke of His coming as immediately near, as the first great event to be expected, which would not be the case to our apprehension, if the Millennial Reign were known to precede it. How could the Church be "looking for and hasting unto

the coming of the day of God"; how could it be said, "The coming of the Lord draweth near"; how could He bid us to "watch, lest coming suddenly He should find us sleeping," if He were not to come till a long period of millennial glory had transpired?

From such statements of Scripture it has been inferred that, while existing agencies are to be diligently employed to spread the truth, we are not to be discouraged if the result should illustrate the Lord's words, "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world *for a testimony unto all the nations*, and then shall the end come"; testimony to all rather than conversion of all. If such universal conversion is the hope that chiefly animates missionary enterprise, a hope so long deferred may make the heart sick and discourage exertion.

But does any passage of Scripture represent that by the preaching of the gospel, prior to the Advent, all mankind will be converted? The promise of the "heathen for His inheritance" is immediately followed by the threatening, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron"; intimating that such possession of "the uttermost parts of the earth" will be with triumphant judgment on his foes (Ps. ii. 8, 9). Isaiah intimates that when the Lord comes to establish the Kingdom, the land will be "full of idols"; but that "the idols He shall utterly abolish." We are not therefore to anticipate the abolition of idolatry prior to the Advent, but as its result (Isa. ii.). As the result of such judgments the Kingdom will

come, rather than of the universal reception of the gospel.

St. Paul cheered the persecuted believers in Thessalonica by the hope of rest after trouble, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ said that at "the end of the world, the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." This does not indicate a state of universal submission. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him." These are not friends who "love His appearing," but foes dreading it.

"Every eye shall see Him." All will know, friends and foes, that the King has come to perfect His Kingdom. As the sun is seen every twenty-four hours by nearly all inhabitants of earth, the vision of Christ as He approaches to establish His Kingdom might be obvious to all. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "The Son of man will come in His glory with all the holy angels." The souls of those who "had not worshipped the beast," shall "live and reign with Christ a thousand years. This is the first resurrection." Hardened rebels will be judged and sent to their own place (Rev. xx.). As, during the Theocracy, Jehovah was visibly present in the temple

by cloud and Shekinah, so Christ will be present in His Church; not subject to material laws, but as His resurrection-body appeared to the disciples unexpectedly in various places, so His whole Church shall know that He dwells among them. Theoretic infidelity will be no longer possible. The Jews will recognize their long-rejected Messiah, and their conversion will bring in the fulness of the Gentiles. Antichrist will be dethroned, and the spell of the false prophet broken. All who sit in darkness will see the great light. The Church, animated by the presence of the King, and filled with the Spirit, will then literally "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," and "all shall know Him, from the least unto the greatest."

To this theory it is objected that conversion by external vision is inferior to that produced by internal perception of the truth, even as Christ said, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." But Saul of Tarsus was converted by the vision of Christ, and his subsequent career did not suggest inferiority. Surely the expectation of a personal reign of Christ on the earth will not necessarily tend to render those who share it less spiritual, inasmuch as all Christians are looking for the personal reign of Christ in heaven, and to the beholding Him "face to face" as the consummation of their purity and bliss. It has been urged that "we are not to expect a future dispensation in which the Saviour will subdue unbelievers by that visible sign from heaven which He

always refused because it was contrary to His method of dealing with souls" (Monsell). But our Lord refused this to Pharisees who were "tempting Him." Yet even to these He predicted "the sign of the prophet Jonas"; and fulfilled it when He rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven in the sight of His disciples. This manifestation gave new vigour to their faith; it caused a resurrection of their own spiritual life; it was the mighty truth with which they went forth on their gospel mission to the world. The sign which the Pharisees were denied, was distinctly promised to be given at the coming of the Son of man: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." Inasmuch as the sign from heaven in the Resurrection and Ascension prefaced the publication of the gospel to the world, the sign of the visible Advent of Christ to introduce the millennial reign would not be a "retrogression," but an advance; not a new method, but a further development of the old.

The Spirit and the Word, the only present agencies, existed in the Old Testament dispensation, yet the fuller manifestation of both was accompanied by the outward signs of the first Advent, and may also be by those of the second. The Apostles, when they sought help to speak the word, asked also for outward signs, saying, "Grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the Name of Thy holy Servant Jesus." There is no evidence that such signs will never be renewed.

The prophecies respecting the first Advent were fulfilled literally, although such fulfilment had seemed impossible. Why, then, should all predictions respecting the second Advent be interpreted spiritually, because their literal fulfilment is attended with difficulties which we cannot as yet explain? The Kingdom now grows from heart to heart by purely spiritual means; but it is nowhere in the Bible declared that by these means alone the Kingdom is to become universal. Although the majority of those who have heard the gospel have rejected it, this failure has resulted not from imperfection in the methods, but from the wickedness of men, and verifies the predictions of God's own Word. It is discouraging; but greater discouragement would arise from the expectation of the Kingdom by present agencies alone; whereas the expectation of the personal Advent animates us with the certainty of a triumph which may speedily be accomplished; and prompts to diligence, "lest coming suddenly He find us sleeping." Present methods will be supplemented, but not superseded. The Word of God will still be circulated, the gospel preached, the Church bear witness; but this will be accompanied with visible tokens of the presence of the King and more abundant outpourings of the Holy Spirit. It is to the possible nearness of this personal coming of Christ that many are looking. They do not consider that the golden age, so slowly advancing, must first intervene. They hope that very soon the King will appear who shall "judge the people with righteousness,

and break in pieces the oppressor, and save the souls of the needy; whose Name shall endure for ever, and all nations shall call Him blessed." Before the enjoyment of the Kingdom in heaven, the Kingdom will come on earth. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them; and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Each theory has its difficulties. There are texts which are not easily explained in harmony with either view. But all believe that some day, remote or near, the Kingdom of God will come. Milton shared this hope when, impatient of the level plains of prose, he soared aloft in such rhapsodies as when he pictured his country casting away from her the rags of vice, and pressing on in happy emulation "to be found the soberest, wisest, and most Christian people at that day, when Thou, the shortly-expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and, distributing national honours and rewards to religious and just commonwealths, shalt put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming Thy universal and mild monarchy through heaven and earth; where they undoubtedly, that by their labours, counsels, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion and their country, shall receive, above the inferior orders of the blessed, the regal addition of principalities and thrones into their glorious titles, and in supereminence of beatific vision, progressing the dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity, shall clasp

inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in overmeasure for ever." Poetry has delighted to extol that Golden Age, of which philosophers have dreamed, but which is to be realized only by the coming of Christ. It is the acceptance of His salvation, the recognition of His authority, which will secure all other blessings to mankind. The believer, praying, working, waiting, rejoices in hope of the day when—

> "One song employs all nations ; and all cry,
> 'Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us!'
> The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
> Shout to each other, and the mountain-tops
> From distant mountains catch the flying joy ;
> Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
> Earth rolls the rapturous Hosannah round.
> Bright as a sun the sacred city shines ;
> All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
> Flock to that light. From every clime they come
> To see thy beauty and to share thy joy,
> O Sion ! an assembly such as earth
> Saw never, such as Heaven stoops down to see.
> Come then, and, added to thy many crowns,
> Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth ;
> Thy word fulfilled, the conquest of a world!"—COWPER.

What Christian does not long for such a millennium ? O for the time when the Right shall reign, and not mere Might ; when distinctions of station, endowment, nationality, shall not be the destruction of brotherhood ; when men shall everywhere show that they are children of one Father ; trusting, not fearing one another, and each seeking his own good only in alliance with that of his neighbour ; when fortresses and fleets shall no longer frown defiance ; when boundaries of mountains, rivers, and oceans shall no longer separate

the human family into antagonistic rivalries; when swords shall indeed "be turned into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks"; when thrones shall never be symbols of pride, objects of fear, and prizes of ambition; when laws and rulers shall no more be needed to resist violence and punish wrong, but only to guide and assist in common action for the common weal! O for the time when holy love shall no longer be debased to brutish lust, nor strength of body or brain be used to injure or distress; when Science shall pour fresh light on Religion, and every new discovery evoke new hallelujahs to the Creator; when the pen and the press shall never be employed to assail the truth of God or corrupt the minds of men; when speech shall never utter what is false, impure, or unkind; when music shall never lend its charms to licentiousness or stir the passions of war, and painting and sculpture shall portray only what is beautiful and pure; when commerce in all its transactions shall be honest and beneficent; when labour shall never be oppressive and irksome, but give joy to the producer as well as to the purchaser; when amusement shall be only an exchange of pleasure, recreating for fresh toil, and never stooping to give delight by stimulants that enervate the body or corrupt the mind!

O for the time when in the Church there shall be no more sectarian rivalries, bitter controversies, worldly expedients, mammon-worship, ambitious intrigues, popularity-courting, secret envyings, personal jealousies; when, though all may never think and

worship exactly alike, varieties of method shall only the more illustrate unity and stimulate love; when all will rejoice in each other's fellowship, promote one another's usefulness, and fulfil the Saviour's prayer "that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them and Thou in me, that they may be perfected in one"! How blessed the day—Lord, hasten it!—when there shall no longer be the Church and the world, but when the Church will have absorbed the world, and God be all and in all! Then at length shall the vision of Isaiah become obvious: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

V.—Prayer for the Coming of the Kingdom.

1. *Not unnecessary.*—All acceptable prayer must be for what is the Will of God. Such prayer benefits ourselves by blending our will with His; and thus promotes obedience, because, as He rules in a universe of mind, the fulfilment of His purposes involves our accord, and so helps on the accomplishment of His Will. We are thus "fellow-workers with God."

2. *What the prayer includes.*—We ask the King to control the powers of Nature and events in Providence so as to promote His Kingdom. He rules supreme,

and everything may become a minister in His service. He who bade the waters of the Red Sea overthrow Pharaoh, and gave Israel streams from the rock, can interpose to preserve His Church in the wilderness which still separates us from the land of promise. If Satan may corrupt the Church within, or stir up enemies from without, much more may the Divine Head of the Church maintain its internal purity and strength. We pray that whatever is intended by the foe for harm may be overruled for good; and that even ambition and war may be instrumental for the final victory. We pray especially that "the Spirit may be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." The disciples were commanded not only to proclaim the Kingdom, but to expect the promise of the Spirit, and we know that while they prayed the Holy Ghost was given, and they saw "the Kingdom of God come with power." We hear Him say, "I come quickly"; and we respond, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

3. *A test of character.*—If we are truly regenerate, we do not simply submit to the Kingdom of God, but desire it, because, being "heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ," it is not only His, but our own. All prayer is practical, for, if sincere, it is accompanied by corresponding efforts. The Kingdom comes to our own soul experimentally. The prayer therefore involves efforts to promote it in our own hearts and lives, by study of its laws, observance of its precepts, response to its

claims. We cannot truly pray for it to come unless we open the door of every part of our nature to its entrance, that its principles may permeate every thought, motive, and action. "A good Christian is like a pair of compasses, one foot of the compass stands upon the centre, the other part of it goes round the circle" (Watson). We should give "*all* diligence," "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The life of its subjects best recommends the Kingdom to others, as it also best hallows the Name. When we are "living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men," we recommend His rule wherever we go. Loyal tribute to the King by all who breathe this prayer will promote the Kingdom in the minds of strangers and even foes, who, "seeing our good works, will glorify our Father who is in heaven." Alas, how many utter this petition without any intention to submit to this rule, salute the Monarch while plotting against His throne; while repeating with their lips "Thy Kingdom come," say by their actions, "We will not have this man to reign over us"! To be self-pleasers is self-exile; we are outlawed by refusing to come within the law; and our own petition is our self-pronounced doom.

4. The prayer thus prompts to *missionary zeal*. It is hypocrisy to pray for the coming of the Kingdom if we are not helping to promote it. To be content with the saving of our own soul without caring for others, shows how little that Kingdom has come to

ourselves. There are various offices in the Church to which all are not called, but every man, until all shall know Him, is to "say to his neighbour, Know thou the Lord." "Let him that heareth say, Come." This prayer, then, should prompt those who offer it to extend the Kingdom: by evangelizing the multitudes who are still outside the Church; by circulating the Scriptures and religious literature; by teaching the young; by rescuing the fallen, reclaiming the drunkard, saving the lost. Sincerity in offering this petition involves efforts, personal or pecuniary, to send the gospel through the world. The command of the King is clear: "Preach the gospel to every creature." Christianity is necessarily aggressive. It is intended for the world, and its adherents are bound to propagate it. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they are sent?" Who is willing to go? Who will spare his child? Who will deny himself to provide the cost? The prayer asks for fresh openings for service at home. Who is willing to enter the open door; to give up time and ease; to spare some personal comfort, and not merely give a part of his superfluity? Again and again the King repeated the emphatic word, "Except a man take up his cross and deny himself, he cannot be my disciple." And except we are willing to make sacrifices to promote it, we cannot consistently pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

Our chief inquiry should not be, "When will Christ come?" but, "What is my present duty?" Christ reproved idle curiosity for all time when He said to His disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons; but ye shall receive power, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." Their duty was to bear testimony even as martyrs, relying on the promised power; not to relax their energies in service by speculations about "seasons." Zeal in extending the Kingdom should be stimulated by either of the views held. If that reign of righteousness is to be expected as the result of present agencies, how earnest should they be who pray "Thy Kingdom come," to promote an event the means of hastening which are already entrusted to the Church! But if the personal appearing of Christ is expected to introduce the millennial reign, and if such Advent may be very near, what an incitement to be at our post of duty, watching, waiting, working! Whether we expect the whole world to be won to the Kingdom by missionary zeal or by the Advent of Christ, it is His imperative command that we make known the truth. If we relax our efforts because His appearing will at once accomplish what He designs, we are desisting from the work which He has entrusted to us, and thus we cannot be ready for His Advent. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing;" so *doing* our present duty, not idly *dreaming* of what may happen in the future.

5. The prayer also admonishes *preparedness for the*

final coming of the Kingdom. "We pray that it may come in us, we pray that we may be found in it; for come it certainly will, but what will it profit thee, if it shall find thee at the left hand!" (Augustine). By many a mourner at the open grave the prayer is offered with solemn emphasis, "We beseech Thee, that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect and to hasten Thy Kingdom." Do we really desire this? Are we of the number of the elect of whom Jesus said, "They cry day and night unto God"? Suppose the Kingdom should come while we are neglecting its claims and trampling on its laws! Suppose it should come while discussing the method and the time of it, we are neglecting to prepare for it! The premillennial Advent of our Lord may appear to many, as to good Matthew Henry, a "doubtful notion," but all should resolve, "I will so live that I may live with Him, come when He may, and reign where He may." The Kingdom of Glory can only be enjoyed by those who have already become subjects of the Kingdom of Grace. Grace is glory in the seed; glory is grace in the flower. The King gives both grace and glory; but they who reject the former are not fit for the latter. If we would reign with Christ, we must ourselves be subject to Christ. They who breathe this prayer should be "looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God. What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness! We, according to His promise, look

for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in His sight."

In closing this meditation, let us be encouraged by thinking of the great congregation by whom this petition has been and is presented to God. Though many never utter it at all, and many repeat it without thought, yet from what multitudes of true hearts during nearly nineteen centuries has it gone up to God, its volume and fervour still increasing to the present day! It is ascending now from every clime, in varied accents of human speech. Greenlander and Esquimaux echo it back to Bechuana and Hottentot; learned Brahmin and cultured Chinaman respond to the same litany with Caffres and Zulus; the prayer, wafted to heaven in our dear English tongue from both sides the Atlantic, is swollen by the voices of a "great multitude which no man can number, of every tribe and people and kindred and nation"; many an earnest Christian worker breathes it, from Sunday school class and motley throng in mission-hall or gathered crowd by the wayside; it ascends from rustic conventicle and majestic cathedral; there are babes in Christ who lisp it, and veterans of service who, with ever-increasing fervour, plead—"Thy Kingdom come;" there are poor saints unable to do anything for it by money, but who do very much for it by prayer; there are the sick and infirm

ones no longer capable of actively promoting it, but who, from chambers of weakness and beds of pain, speed all the workers by giving this petition precedence above any personal request for health and life. And while it ascends from earth, it mingles with the same petition from angels and saints in heaven. O that we may share in this "Communion of the saints"! That God may reign in our own hearts, throughout the world, and in the latter day glory, let us ever pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

Come, Lord, to earth again;
Come quickly, come and reign:
Lord Jesu, come!
Enthrone the struggling right,
Make clear the clouded light,
In victory close the fight:
Lord, quickly come!

The love of some grows cold;
Thy foes are waxing bold:
Lord Jesu, come!
They mock our hope delayed,
Our little progress made,
Thy precepts disobeyed:
Lord, quickly come!

Bid war and faction cease,
Bring in the reign of peace:
Lord Jesu, come!
Set every captive free;
Let all men brothers be;
Heal earth's long malady:
Lord, quickly come!

Assert Thy right divine;
O'er all the nations shine:
Lord Jesu, come!
Then earth like heaven shall sing,
With hallelujahs ring,
And hail her rightful King:
Lord, quickly come!—N. H.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THIRD PETITION.

"THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN."

THE third petition is the appropriate sequel to those which precede. As the hallowing of the Name of the Father is essential to the coming of a Kingdom based on intelligent apprehension and cordial reverence, so the Kingdom implies rule, and the coming of it submission. This is not strictly a separate petition, but a development of the second. We pray that the Kingdom may come on earth by its laws being obeyed. The Will of God, perfectly done in heaven, has been only partially known and obeyed on earth. We pray that this discrepancy may cease, and that the whole realm of God may be harmonized in obedience. As with all the petitions, this one, besides being related to the rest, is based on the Invocation, "Father." God says, "If I be a Father, where is my honour?" And His children pray, Our Father in Heaven, let Thy holy, loving, Fatherly Will be done. On Sinai the Law rang out trumpet-tongued, "Do the Will of God": on the Mount of Beatitudes the Saviour taught us

to obey this Law by asking grace from the Lawgiver to fulfil it.

I.—The Will of God.

This petition is, like the Invocation, a protest against the materialism which recognises Power alone. Mere material forces, physical laws, have no volition. The abstraction called "a power, not ourselves, that works for righteousness," suggests ideas utterly different from those of the prayer, "Our Father! Thy Will be done!" How cold, dreary, terrible, the notion of mere Power controlling us, with no loving purpose! What a sense of helplessness is engendered by it, what terror of the Power which cannot be resisted or evaded, against which there is no appeal, under which we may be crushed! This would foster a Fatalism as discouraging to exertion as to prayer. It would also prevent any sense of sin. I may be unfortunate in becoming its victim, I cannot be guilty of resisting its volition. I may lament my weakness, but cannot be conscious of wickedness. But when I recognise the rule of a loving and holy Father, I acknowledge my sin in resisting His commands, and am prompt to reform what is wrong instead of pleading a resistless necessity. "Hence comes a conviction, not that we have been unable to resist, but that we have actually resisted that Power which is working for our deliverance and blessedness. A Power we shall then joyfully confess

it to be, when we know that it is not that merely or principally" (Maurice).

We recognise a loving will, for He is our Father; a holy will, for He is in heaven. We need not fear the Power which executes the Will of "Our Father." We appeal to Him as developing in His Will, tender compassion, beneficent purpose, perfect righteousness. He does not reign to exhibit sovereignty; He does not decree simply because He chooses; His Will is the outcome of His Fatherhood. There must be much that is mysterious in the Will of the Infinite God. It would be presumptuous to dictate what it ought to be, or to pronounce by our unaided understanding what it is; but in the light of His own revelation, it would be ungrateful and false to say that we know nothing of His Will, when He has revealed it not only in His Word but by His Son, who, being from eternity "in the bosom of the Father," has "declared Him." He is the everlasting Word, the Revealer. In all His earthly life we learn the nature of His Father's Will. And He who from eternity knew it, bids us pray that it may be done. He who came to save us would not instruct us to pray for the accomplishment of a Will opposed to His own mission. There can be no secret purpose in God conflicting with His Will as illustrated by Christ. We are therefore secure when we pray, "Thy Will be done," inasmuch as the prayer is indited by our Saviour, and the Will is the Will of our Father.

God's Potential Will in creation and providence none can resist. "He speaks and it is done. Who

can stay His hand, or say, What doest Thou?" This is done by all creatures inferior to man, everywhere, absolutely, on earth as in heaven. Our part is mentally to concur in it, to be glad that His Power is supreme. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." We ask that all men may carry out the Will, either by active service or patient suffering. We pray "not in order that God may do His own Will, but that we may be willing and enabled to do what He wills to be done by us" (Cyprian). This brings us to the consideration of

II.—God's Preceptive Will in Relation to the Human Will.

God recognises in man, made in His likeness, a capacity of Will corresponding with His own. He is not mere Force, and we are not mere machines. We have the Divine faculty of observing, considering, judging, approving, resolving, performing. We can concur with His Will or dispute it; perform or resist it. It is frivolous to debate about foreknowledge, and preordination, and philosophical necessity, as though what will be must ever have been certain, and therefore such as no will, or act, or prayer can change. We know by our own consciousness that we possess this power of Will, which can be exercised in obeying that of God, and is as free when in harmony with it as when resisting it. But we also know that such resistance is possible. It is a sad and solemn fact that

a created will can resist the Creator. Sun, moon, and stars unconsciously obey, but man stands forth amidst the loyal universe, and dares to say "No" to the Almighty. This faculty is recognised in all the commands, promises and threatenings of Holy Scripture. We are not told to abrogate our function of volition, no other mind but His being active; but to exercise our will freely in accord with His. The Son of God said to the Jews, "Ye *will not* come unto me that ye might have life." His own Will was opposed by theirs. "How often *would I* have gathered thy children, and *ye would not!*" God sent His Son to bring our will into accord with His own. The apostles besought men in "Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." To produce this harmony the Divine Spirit enters human hearts, but we have the power to cherish or resist these Divine influences. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God;" "Quench not the Spirit." "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." God can influence our will for good without destroying our freedom of choice. For this prayed saints of old, "Teach me to do Thy Will. Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies." And for this our Lord taught us to pray when we say, "Thy Will be done."

III.—Why should God's Will be done?

Because it is God's. He has every right to rule; as Creator and Preserver, He gives laws to all things that depend on Him for existence; as infinitely Good

He has a moral right to the willing homage of all intelligent beings. It is reasonable that they should employ the faculties He gave, in accordance with His own inherent perfections and revealed commands. We ask for the fulfilment of "that good, acceptable, and perfect Will of God." We obey it because it must be beneficent like Himself; it is our Father's will, and, corresponds to His Name. His precepts no less than His promises are the expressions of His love; in commanding duties He bestows benefits; in forbidding sins He guards from wounds. "Honour thy father and thy mother" implies, Receive honour in your turn. "Thou shalt not kill" involves, None must kill thee; and "Thou shalt not steal" declares, None must rob thee. His most emphatic warnings mean, "Do thyself no harm"; His severest threatenings cry, "Why will ye die?" Nothing is forbidden which would not be an injury; nothing enjoined which is not for our good. He places us on an estate and bids us cultivate it for Him, asking no rent but our diligence, and promising that we shall enjoy the fruits as our own. "He bids us dig a mine, and take all the gold."

Besides the benefits resulting, there is joy in the very act. Our lesser wheels revolve smoothly in harmony with the great machinery of Love, instead of grating and breaking in hopeless counteraction. There is peace in being consciously in accord with our own higher nature. We rejoice when what we will is what Truth and Righteousness require. Above all, there is satisfaction in feeling that our strongest efforts

correspond with the loving Will of our Father. "In keeping of them there is great reward." This dignifies the humblest lot, and raises to the rank of Divine service the most menial employment. The apostle comforted those bond-slaves of the Roman Empire who believed in Jesus by this grand consideration, that however unjust or cruel their earthly masters might be, yet in obeying them those slaves were serving the Lord Christ. Bodily bondage thus became spiritual freedom. When the thing we do has in itself neither profit nor honour, if we do it in His name it at once becomes noble and blessed.

"Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee.

A man that looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heaven espy.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold:
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told."—HERBERT.

IV.—Angelic Obedience.

As Moses when erecting the tabernacle was commanded to "make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount," so we have here an example

of the way in which the will of God is to be done by men on earth—"as it is done in heaven." If for a moment the word suggests the starry heavens, we see an illustration of obedience, unceasing, untiring, exact; but this is mechanical, involuntary, lifeless. One man endowed with mind and will may render more homage than all the solar system. We must look beyond the sidereal, even to "the third heavens," for the pattern of our obedience.

The resemblance of the obedience of angels to that of men suggests resemblance of nature. At the creation of the world "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." We say "Our Father," and rejoice that "now are we the sons of God." God made man "a little lower than the angels," which implies only a difference of degree. Angels are described as men when they appeared to Abraham, to Lot, to Gideon, to Daniel, to Zechariah. Angels appeared as men at the Resurrection of our Lord and at the Ascension, and thus they are designated in the Apocalypse.

From such statements we may infer that angels are only a higher species of man; higher by actually obeying, just as we ought to obey, so that the true ideal of humanity is to be found in them; and we are restored to the true human type, by resemblance to angels, when the Will of God is done by us as by them. It is a joy to feel that if there are spirits of evil plotting to do us harm, there are holy angels, closely allied to us, only a little above us, in sympathy

with us and employed in helping us. Obedience is the same with all moral beings. Everywhere the same authority and love appeal to a similar understanding and volition. Holy angels as well as good men, from love to God, give heed to His Will; perform it; delight in it; and so their obedience is a model for our own.

1. *Angels do the Will of God lovingly.*—It must be universally true that no obedience is acceptable to God which love does not inspire. Angels are highest in the scale of moral beings, and must therefore be highest in the possession and exercise of that love which is the fulfilling of all law. They are in the immediate presence of God, whose essence is love, therefore under its most potent influence. Dwelling in His light, they reflect and share it. As seraphim a holy fire impels them to do the Will of Him they adore. Such love secures the *perfect loyalty* which obeys every command of God because it is His. They do not first bring it to the tribunal of their own judgment, and then comply with it in proportion as they understand the reason of it. Obedience prompted by love is *cheerful.* A willing heart makes a merry countenance, and inspires an obedience the happy spontaneity of which renders fragrant the work done. Such "service is perfect freedom." Angels obey, not because they must, but because they would. As it would be pain to birds to be restrained from singing when the flowers deck the fields; as it is cruelty to cage the lark whose loftiest flights express its greatest

pleasure; so it would be a burden to angels to be spared the service which is their bliss. Heaven is a synonym for happiness; and there is not a truer description of its joy than this—"His servants shall serve Him." An old writer exclaims, "It is the mirth of heaven to obey its King." They therefore do it *promptly*. Love does not loiter. "He maketh His angels winds, His ministers a flaming fire." They never wait for a more convenient season, nor substitute a purpose to do for present doing. Gabriel, "being caused to fly swiftly," brought the reply to the prophet "whiles he was speaking in prayer." Love spares no pains. Angels who "excel in strength," with all that strength "do His commandments." Their capacities may vary, but each does the Will of God with his might. Nothing is too trivial for the putting forth of every needful energy, when the end in view is the Will of God whom they perfectly love.

We are taught to pray that our obedience may, like theirs, be that of love. Then will it be loyal, unquestioning, cheerful, prompt, unsparing. As children obey wise and tender parents from loving trust before they acquire from experience the conviction that their own welfare is thus best secured, so let us obey our Father in heaven, even when we cannot understand His reason and methods. Such obedience is noblest liberty, for it is the gratification of our own heaven-born impulse; when "we love the thing which God commandeth, and desire that which He doth promise." It may well be cheerful when thereby we

share the joy of heaven; and possess a sign that we belong to Him whose example, as the Lord of angels, we are supremely to follow, and who said, "I delight to do Thy will." In the words of Bishop Jeremy Taylor: "As no man will complain that his head is a prisoner when it is enriched with a crown; so, when the Son of God hath made us free, and hath only subjected us to the service of the Spirit, we are free as princes within the circle of their diadem, and our chains are bracelets, and the law is a law of liberty, and 'His service is perfect freedom'; and the more we are subjects, the more 'we shall reign as kings,' and the faster we run, the easier is our burden; and Christ's yoke is like feathers to a bird, not loads, but helps to motion, and we do not pity birds, so as in summer to wish them unfeathered that they might be cooler and lighter."

Then will our obedience be *prompt.* Alas! how often we are convinced of some evil and resolve to forsake it, or of some duty and comfort our conscience by the purpose of performing it to-morrow! whereas, in an attitude of loving obedience, we should pray, "'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth"; and in grateful retrospection be able to say, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." Then also will obedience be *unstinted.* We should always do our best. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" when God commands, inspects, rewards. "She hath done what she could" is a commendation not to be surpassed, and not confined to

rank or power. The very weakest and lowliest may share it with the strongest and greatest. Men on earth are accepted with cherubim and seraphim, when, with them, they do what they can. It is to be feared that some who bear the Christian name are still but as Jews, under the restraints of law. They try to do their duty, fearing to displease God and to incur penalty. But believers in Christ have not received "the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." We obey, not as slaves, but as sons. Our service is not measured by payment nor constrained by fear; "We freely serve because we freely love."

2. *They do it intelligently.*—Their faith is rational, their loyalty discerning. They take pains to know whether the command is really from God and not their own imagination; and then to understand what it really means, not what they suppose it capable of meaning. "Bless ye the Lord, ye His angels, that do His commandments, *hearkening* unto the voice of His word." They do not rush heedlessly into service. So we should pray, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law." In order intelligently to obey, we are to "search the Scriptures," which are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

3. *They do it prayerfully.*—If prayer is more than the mere asking for gifts; if it is the outpouring of a filial heart, heaven would lack one chief element of bliss if angels did not pray. The Lord of angels

prayed. Knowing how surely the Will of the Father would be accomplished, He expressed His concurrence with that Will in earnest supplications. He still prays. He makes intercession for transgressors, that they may begin to do the Will of God: and for His faithful servants, that they may go on to do it. "This must surely be a law of the heavenly world. Angels and the 'spirits of just men made perfect,' because of their thorough submission to the will of God, are the most fervent of all His creatures in their prayers, and see by the piercing glances of their faith, and soar by the strong wings of intercession, on into the everlasting purposes of God" (H. Reynolds). Many of our petitions can have no place in heaven, but surely this one will never cease to be the desire of glorified saints and unfallen angels. Heavenly perfection must include the purity and happiness which are inseparable from obedience. Not for themselves alone, but for all intelligent beings they pray. While they do God's Will, they pray that it may be done. So let us do it; doing it, the more we pray; praying for it, the more we do it.

4. *They do all God's Will.*—We on earth are apt to make selections. Obedience is easy when the Will of God agrees with the opinions of the society in which we move; when it does not threaten property, trade, comfort; when it does not demand uncongenial exertion, the breaking of matured habits, or painful self-sacrifice. We think we are obeying the Will of God when we may be only pleasing ourselves. If we walk along the path of duty when it is smooth and

flowery, but turn aside when it scales the steep crag, our motive is the gratifying of self, not the obeying of God. But in heaven, inasmuch as they do God's Will because it is His, angels do it *all.* We cannot imagine them selecting what may be most pleasant. They loyally execute *every* order—in brilliant array to proclaim the Law, or singly to withstand Balaam; to give food to Elijah, or to carry him to heaven; to form a bodyguard for Elisha, or to shut the lions' mouths for Daniel; to destroy the hosts of Sennacherib, or to bear a quick reply to one lonely suppliant's prayer. So we do God's Will as they do it in heaven when we obey without preference, whether to work amid the blaze of publicity or in the shade of obscurity, whether to range the earth in unresting activity or to wait His Will in humble readiness.

> "God doth not need
> Either man's work, or His own gifts; who best
> Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best: His state
> Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
> They also serve who only stand and wait."—MILTON.

After some important battle, a great general was conversing with his officers respecting the various incidents of the fight. The names were mentioned of men who had stormed batteries, held their post against fearful odds, fought single-handed against a crowd of assailants, or carried off wounded comrades amid a shower of bullets. "No (said he); you are all mistaken: the best man in the field to-day was a soldier who had his arm lifted up against an enemy,

but who, on hearing the trumpet sound a retreat, checked himself, and dropped his arm without striking the blow. That perfect and ready obedience to the will of his general is then oblest thing that has been done to-day" (Hare). How often we feel it easier to wield the sword than sheathe it, to pursue than to retreat, to work than to wait! Yet there should be no difference in our obedience when we cannot doubt what is the Will of God. One command neglected, because uncongenial, mars the rest of our obedience. In a harp of many strings, one that is out of tune makes the whole discordant. Then only "shall we not be ashamed" when, like the angels, we "have respect unto all" the commandments of God.

5. *They do it always.*—"They serve Him day and night in His temple." There are no intervals of idleness; interruption in obedience would be a suspension of bliss. Let ours resemble theirs; not by fits and starts, with intervening relapses; not needing revivals out of apathy; not dependent on novelty, which must soon lose its charm, but patient and persevering under all circumstances; not as a mountain-torrent whose rocky channel is bare and sunburnt when snows are not melting and rains do not fall, but as a deep, broad river ever flowing with fertilizing tide. "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep *all my commandments always!*"

6. *They all do it, and do it altogether.*—Not as here, a few amongst the many, and these objects of curiosity

and wonder, sometimes of ridicule and hatred ; but every one does it; the countless host forming a glorious and perfect unity of obedience with endless diversity of gifts. There is not one amongst that great multitude who questions "why." "Are they not *all* ministering spirits?" each contented with his allotted service as most honourable because appointed by God. No time or strength is wasted on controversy. The possessor of ten talents does not despise the possessor of only one, nor does the latter envy the former. One worker does not condemn his fellow because he uses varying methods. There is no insisting on uniformity of operation where there is this grand unity of motive; no attempt to fetter the freedom the Creator gives, by bonds the creature invents. There is no friction of the wheels, because each is perfectly fitted to the central power and plan. All the workers are in harmony with each other, because all are perfectly doing the Will of God.

O for such harmony on earth! Alas, how much time and energy are wasted in contentions between fellow-servants in imposing their preferences on others, and in failing to recognise true service unless performed according to some standard of man's devising! The cure is an earnest desire to do the Will of God. As the structure of the earth is consolidated by every particle gravitating towards the same centre, so the more our minds and hearts in all our service are directed towards God the more we must needs approach each other.

7. *They do it in the presence of God.*—The actual presence and inspection of one we honour acts as an additional stimulus to the obedience of love. The angel who appeared to Zacharias said, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God." The "many angels round about the throne do always behold the face of the Father," and the eye of Him whom they supremely adore is upon them. No wonder, therefore, that they do His Will earnestly, constantly, cheerfully, harmoniously. God is really as near to us here on earth as He is to them in heaven! We do not behold His face, but we may by faith realize His presence, and in holy service "endure, seeing the Invisible." If soldiers are animated by the presence of the general, if servants by the inspection of their master, if children by the loving looks of their parents, should not we serve and obey "as ever in our Great Taskmaster's eye," when He is our loving Father?

Although the prayer refers to the manner of obedience, not to the kind of work, we cannot refrain from noticing how numerous and varied are the services performed by angels which are of a beneficent character. They all "minister for the heirs of salvation"; they "encamp round about them that fear God"; they have a "charge concerning" the righteous, to "keep them in all their ways"; they do not overlook "one of these little ones who believe in Jesus": they rescued an apostle from prison, and carried a beggar into Abraham's bosom. In doing the Will of God, princes in heaven serve sinners on earth.

"How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us, that succour want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skyes like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiendes to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love and nothing for reward:
O why should heavenly God to men have such regard!"

—SPENSER.

If angels thus succour fallen men, surely we should obey that same Will towards one another; ministering to the saints, protecting the weak, caring for little children, visiting the sick, tending the dying. In such service we are apt to neglect small acts of kindness while thinking to do great things, and waiting for these to present themselves. "A wise man," said Lord Bacon, "will make more opportunities than he finds." Benevolence like that of the angels will never wait for a call to some mighty act, when to give a cup of cold water is at hand. While imitating their obedience to Him whose "Nature and property is ever to show mercy," we shall never lack opportunities.

"Small service is true service while it lasts;
Of friends, however humble, scorn not one;
The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun."

—WORDSWORTH.

In all benevolent work we are doing the Will of God. But there is no department of such work so important as that of endeavouring to save the souls of men. Here also we may learn a lesson from the angels. They announced the birth of Jesus; ministered

to Him in the wilderness and in Gethsemane; appeared at the Resurrection and Ascension; came to the disciples to succour and direct them; to Philip, Acts viii. 26; Cornelius, x. 3–22; Peter, xii. 7–9; Paul, xxvii. 23; and John, Rev. i. 1; and are deeply interested in the salvation provided for sinful men. "Which things the angels desire to look into." "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Possessed of lofty intelligence, they understand how much is involved in the salvation of one soul. Already in possession of joy complete, they would not burst forth into fresh gladness on account of some trivial event. If we do the Will of God as they do it, we shall feel that the repentance of even one sinner is ample reward for a life of labour, since it furnishes occasion for fresh joy in heaven. O for the time when the varied wills of men, not destroyed nor compressed into a rigid uniformity, but in their multiplicity, each free yet all concurring, shall form one Commonwealth of Willinghood in the perfect service of the Eternal King!

V.—Passive Obedience.

Men have also to obey in another method unknown to angels. Varied sorrows, all overruled for good, need special help for us to endure them patiently. The purposes of God must be accomplished whether we assent to them or not. We here pray that we may render this assent. The character of any trial is

changed when we accept it from a Father; when we are cheerfully led, instead of being unwillingly driven; when we take up our burden and carry it, instead of trailing it along the rocky path. God's Will may concur with our own wish; or our prayer may bring us what we ask; but there will often be times when what we wish we cannot have. But we may always embrace the Will of God, and so, by making His Will ours, have our own. Luther said, "I do not ask '*Thy* Will be done,' but *my* will be done, because *Thy* Will is now *my* will, and I best get my own will by unquestioning acceptance of Thine." It would not be good for us to have our own will always. Were God to give us liberty of choice, it would be wise to return that liberty to Him who is infallibly wise and unfailingly kind. Often, as we look back, we see places where we wished to take some other path than that in which God was leading us, and we perceive that our own preference would have led us into bogs or over precipices.

"Lord, Thou art mine and I am Thine,
If mine I am: and Thine much more,
Than I or ought, or can be mine.
Yet to be Thine, doth me restore;
So that again I now am mine;
And with advantage, mine the more,
Since *this* being mine brings with it Thine,
And Thou with me dost Thee restore.
If I without Thee would be mine,
I neither should be mine nor Thine."—HERBERT.

"Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal

weight of glory!" Light compared with the weight of glory, momentary compared with the eternal result, they are always operating for our welfare even when causing us most suffering. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." They are active, beneficent, harmonious; they work together for good. Often our trials act as a prickly hedge which wounds, but guard us from the steep precipice or the deep river. Loss of property may enrich the soul. Trials reveal to us ourselves, "as soaking rain shows damaged places in the roof which need mending." They bring our sins to remembrance, as in the case of Joseph's brethren. They separate us from many perilous temptations and worldly snares; they draw or drive us to the throne of grace; they are a needful discipline of faith, and our patient endurance is a helpful example.

As the destruction of Aquileia and other towns on the Italian coast caused their inhabitants to flee to the islets of the lagoon, from which there afterwards arose the temples and palaces of the queenly city of the Adriatic, so the most threatening perils and darkest trials of the believer have often been the means of erecting temples of spiritual beauty, far surpassing that palatial city of the sea. Whatever brightness there may be in any object through colour of its own, this is far exceeded by the sun's own rays when reflected from it. A broken vessel, a fragment of glass, may blaze with solar splendour, when objects of perfect form, artistic beauty, and costly material

may send back no heavenly radiance. The stream flowing placidly through the meadows may be beautiful; but not until obstructed by rocks, broken into rapids, tumbling over precipices, is it brilliant with all the colours of the solar spectrum, and spanned by the rainbow. Resistance to our Father's Will is opposition to our own welfare; murmuring at trials is discontent with blessings. Let us then take the oar of duty and leave to Him the helm of direction. Whatever course the pilot steers, let us aid the vessel's progress, through smooth or stormy waters, and while plying the oar let us pray, "Thy Will be done."

"Man's weakness, waiting upon God,
Its end can never miss;
For man on earth no work can do
More angel-like than this.

Siding with God, I always win;
No chance to me is lost:
His Will is sweet to me, even when
It triumphs at my cost.

Ills that God blesses are my good—
All unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His dear Will."—FABER.

VI.—ILLUSTRATIONS OF PASSIVE OBEDIENCE.

We have no examples of passive obedience in unfallen angels, but we have many in the history of those who joined their ranks when they "came out of great tribulation." Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." David—"Let Him do to me as seemeth good

unto Him." Habakkuk—"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, yet I will rejoice in the Lord." Apostles and early Christians "rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer shame for His name," and could "glory in tribulation also." Richard Baxter, when suffering extreme pain on his death-bed, prayed for release, but checked himself thus—"It is not fit for me to prescribe: What Thou wilt, when Thou wilt, how Thou wilt." When asked how he was, he would reply, "Almost well; better than I deserve to be, but not so well as I hope to be." Milton said, "It is not so wretched to be blind as it is not to be capable of enduring blindness. There is a way to strength through weakness. Let me then be the most feeble creature alive as long as that feebleness serves to invigorate my spirit; as long as in that obscurity the light of the Divine presence more clearly shines, then in proportion as I am weak I shall be invincibly strong, and in proportion as I am blind I shall more clearly see. O that I may thus be perfected by feebleness and irradiated by obscurity!" Thus our trials may become means of blessing, and seeming hindrances real helps. Climbing the mountain of God's holiness, our path is obstructed by projecting rocks which tempt the timid to despair and the indolent to turn back, but which the resolute climber grasps with his hands, and uses as a fulcrum for his feet, so making what might have become a stumbling-block a stepping-stone.

The wife of Archbishop Tait thus wrote of the

death of five children within a few weeks: "We were called to part with these five blessed little daughters, each of whom had been received in prayer, educated with prayer, and were now given up, though with bitter anguish, yet with prayer and thanksgiving." The trial is spoken of as "a bright chain to draw the heart up to heaven." And when a son was cut off in the morning of his usefulness, we read that "as the benediction was pronounced over his resting-place, his parents felt that their many prayers for his welfare, offered up from his infancy onwards, had been answered, though not in the way they had expected."

> "All is best, though we oft doubt
> What the unsearchable dispose
> Of highest Wisdom brings about,
> And ever best found in the close."—MILTON.

To a friend of the writer, a poor man, prior to the days of chloroform, related how it had been necessary that his little boy should undergo a most painful operation. The father explained this to his child, asking if he could bear it. "Yes, father, if you will hold my hand." The hand was held, the boy was patient, and health was restored. In every trial our Father holds our hand, and recovery is certain; shall we not then be "patient in tribulation"? A woman of the writer's congregation who had been prostrate during forty years, with an active spirit but helpless body, said to him, "I would rather be in heaven; but if it be my Father's Will, I'm ready to lie here forty years longer." Her sister, during nineteen years

lying helpless and scarcely ever free from pain, said to the author on the day when the preceding page was written, "Last week I was very near home, but the Lord has brought me back. I hoped He would have taken me, but it must be best." The case of the boy was related to her whose father held his hand, and she replied, "Oh, He does more for me—'His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me'! I have seen more of His mercy by lying here than I should have seen if well. What a sweet text that is, 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.'"

Thus the Father helps His children to "glory in tribulation also"; not only to be resigned, but thankful; "strengthened with all might unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father," while from the midst of the furnace exclaiming, "Thy Will be done."

VII.—The Example of Christ.

He who was so high above angels stooped to become below them, that He might illustrate His own prayer. Throughout His ministry He made it manifest that He came to obey: "I seek not mine own will, but the Will of the Father which hath sent me." When the disciples wondered that their Lord talked with the woman of Samaria and seemed indifferent to

food, He said, "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." His satisfaction at the close of life was this, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." His agony in the garden was intense. He knelt, He bowed down, He fell on His face to the ground, "with strong crying and tears" He appealed to His Father, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." The utmost suffering was united with entire resignation, so that He said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" When scourged and crucified, He never ceased to illustrate the prayer, until He said, "It is finished." Agony intense, desire strong, submission absolute. It was fitting that the Father, "in bringing many sons unto glory, should make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Our Leader in the same path of trial "is not ashamed to call us brethren." Thus we pray to be enabled to submit in the same spirit of filial trust.—My Father, Thy Will! Because as Father Thy Will can purpose nothing which is not for Thy glory in Thy children's good, therefore "Thy Will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven."

The example of Christ Himself is the high mark at which we are to aim. We are not to consider what other people do, nor what many Christian professors do, nor what even the best of fallible men do; we are to imitate the obedience of angels, nay, of the Lord of angels. To aim lower would make us

untrue both to God and ourselves. He accepts inferior degrees of service from loyal hearts, but He cannot be satisfied with less than perfection, nor will loving children of His be content with offering less. His Will cannot be lowered to our mean attainments, but our standard must be lifted up to His perfectness. Our dilatory dial must be adjusted to the true solar time. Though we fail in this life to reach the ultimate goal, we must press towards it rather than rest short of it; thus shall we run farther than if our goal were nearer. "Though an archer shoot not so high as he aims, yet the higher he takes his aim, the higher he shoots" (Leighton). "He that aims at a star will shoot higher than he that aims at a bush" (Manton). The Divine target for human endeavour is Divine perfectness. "Ye shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

That we may with all our heart illustrate this prayer is the purpose of God in the discipline of trial. Such obedience is the test of faith and stedfastness, for the great Teacher likened the doer of His word to "the wise man who built his house upon a rock." This secures repose, for the promise is linked with the precept—"Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest." This alone gives reasonable assurance of salvation, for "hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." This is the true key of knowledge, the torch to guide into new paths; for "if any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine." This elevates to a dignity surpassing

noblest descent or royal lineage, for it constitutes us near relatives of Him who said, "Whosoever shall do the Will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother"; and "my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." This secures immortality, for though "the world passeth away and the lust thereof, he that doeth the Will of God abideth for ever." This antedates heaven's bliss and allies us already with angels, for it is characteristic of the home of the blessed that "His servants shall serve Him."

With what thoughtfulness and sincerity should we offer such a prayer! How many are self-convicted as they utter it, acknowledging as the standard of conduct an example they have no intention to imitate! "In this prayer the godless man condemns himself, the sufferer comforts himself, the slothful invigorates himself, the self-willed rebukes himself, and the will of the spirit prays itself through all the impediments of an opposing flesh, to perfect victory" (Stier). The essential difference between the children of God and others is, that they place the Will of God foremost. Human depravity is alienation from the Divine Will, and may underlie great varieties of external behaviour. Every true convert asks at once, "Lord, what wilt *Thou* have me to do?" Alas for professors who daily say, "Thy Will be done," while daily doing their own! How apt we are to be content with convictions that the Will of God ought to be done, with forms of prayer that it may be done, with

regrets that we have not done it, and resolutions to do it hereafter! How often we think we do it when we only do it partially, in trifles that cost nothing, in actions concurring with our own inclinations and worldly interests, or when we wait for some grand occasion for doing it, and let slip the opportunities which each day offers in little things! How often we make abstinence from one fault a palliative to conscience while indulging another! We may be temperate but avaricious, chaste but uncharitable, orthodox but irritable and unforgiving, and all the while suppose we are doing the Will of God.

"This is like a great steep mountain, which blocks up the road to heaven: and some of us waste our time in trying to find a path round it; and some of us fall asleep at the foot of it; and some of us in despair turn our backs on it, and set our faces toward the way of sin and death: but few, very few have the wisdom and the courage to say within themselves, 'The city of our God and King is at the top of that steep mountain: unless I climb the mountain, I can never get there: so the sooner I begin the better'" (Hare). The worst doom that can overtake us is being left to our own will. "My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me; so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels." Refusal to walk in God's ways results in walking in our own; and walking in our own, means following that other guide who always leads those who will not be led by the Spirit.

We may fancy we are masters of ourselves when we refuse to be servants of God, but while dreaming of freedom we are becoming spell-bound by the stronger will of the devil. He promises us freedom in order to rivet on us his chain. He bribes with the assurance of securing to us our will that he may make us subject to his own. It is a terrible description of his victims—"taken captive of the devil at his will." Alas for those who are "tied and bound by the chain of their sins," and have yielded up their freedom to their soul's worst foe!

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, A.D. 252, who illustrated this petition both by active service and martyr-suffering, thus admirably summarizes what we pray to be enabled to do:—"The Will of God is what Christ has done and taught: it is humility in conduct, stedfastness in faith, scrupulousness in our words, rectitude in our deeds, mercy in our works, governance in our habits; it is innocence of injuriousness, and patience under it, preserving peace with the brethren, loving God with all our heart, loving Him as our Father and fearing Him as our God; accounting Christ before all things because He accounted nothing before us, clinging inseparably to His love, being stationed with fortitude and faith at His cross, and when the battle comes for His Name and honour, maintaining in words that constancy which makes confession, in torture that confidence which joins battle, and in death that patience which receives the crown. This is to fulfil the Will of the Father."

This petition, like the rest, includes all mankind. As we recognise the whole brotherhood when we say "*Our* Father"; so we pray that His Will may be obeyed throughout the whole earth. What a reign of peace will it be when every one will be aiming at the same object, obeying the same perfect Will! Then will earth resemble heaven, when the Will of God is done by men as by angels.

CHAPTER V.

THE FOURTH PETITION.

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD."

I.—Meaning and Reasonableness.

THIS petition asks for things needful for the body, and is not, like those preceding it, suited for angels as well as men. Neither is it the prayer of Stoicism, which would regard the body as an incumbrance to be ignored. Nor is it a prayer of the Monasticism, which would punish the body for the sins of the soul, and please the Creator of it by opposing His designs. The body He made dependent on daily bread is to be nourished and prayed for. He Himself took our nature, and did not scorn its needs as undeserving attention because the body is less valuable than the soul, but wrought a great miracle to feed a fainting crowd. Some may fanatically or hypocritically profess to be superior to natural needs, but He said, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye *have need* of all these things." Not "He knoweth that you can do without them, and should rise superior to the desire for them," but "He knoweth

that ye do really need them, and therefore you may ask them from Him."

The place allotted to this petition teaches us that God should be paramount. Not till we have asked that His Name may be hallowed, that His Kingdom may come, that His Will may be done, do we appropriately ask that our bread may be given. To seek exclusively the supply of bodily wants is to rise little above the beasts of the field, who "roar after their prey and seek their meat from God." Such quest is begging, not praying; or, as an old author says, "It is howling when we come to God merely for corn, wine, and oil; when we prefer these things before His glory and the graces of His Spirit." Really, though not avowedly, we pray for our own highest interests when we pray for God's Name, Kingdom, and Will; but here we more explicitly plead for ourselves. Yet in so doing there is no sudden descent from heavenly to earthly things, no abrupt separation between the Divine Kingdom and bodily necessities; for if we ask to do the Will of God on earth, we need to have our earthly life nourished to enable us to do it, and so we ask for bread as a help to service.

Some persons who pray for Divine help in relation to what is spiritual, question the utility of prayer within the region of physical law. But events both great and small are influenced by men's thoughts and volitions; and if we ask God to influence human volitions to bring about physical facts, can we suppose

that His own volitions have no influence on such facts? The spiritual and the natural spheres are inseparable. God presides in both, and may be sought in relation to both. To the same Being whose Will we ask may be done, we may say, "Give us bread"; for is He not our Father, and as such must it not be His Will to supply His children's wants?

The duty and privilege of an earthly parent were recognised by our Lord when He said, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will He give him a stone?" It is a child's instinct to ask food from its parent, whose instinct prompts to give it; it is the instinct of our spiritual nature to look up to God: it is a moral necessity with those who have "received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." We may be unable to reply to all objections against such prayer, but if we are children of God we cannot cease from praying; and though we chiefly ask for the Divine glory and for help to trust and obey, we do promote His glory, and obey, when the filial spirit prays: "Our Father which art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread."

II.—Bread the Gift of "Our Father."

God is the universal Giver. His gifts precede His claims. We do not purchase His favour but respond to it. "We love Him because He first loved us." We do His Will because He has first taught us to say "Father." As His children we are dependent on His

goodness, and say with filial confidence, *Father! give!* Giving implies personality, thought, emotion. We cannot ask material forces to give. It is vain to appeal to gravitation to bestow anything. What a dreary abode this world would be if deprived of God the Giver! How would all the enjoyments of life lose their highest charm, if we no longer received them as from our Father! "These are convictions the loss of which I believe to be the most inexpressible calamity which can fall either upon a man or upon a nation" (W. E. Gladstone). Were there no personal God, we could not say, "Give": were He not our Father, we could not as children come to Him day by day for bread. Our Father is the universal Giver because He is the universal Proprietor. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." He is the life of all that lives. "He preserveth man and beast." By His providential care the innumerable tribes of living creatures are fed. "He heareth the ravens that cry." The birds have neither storehouse nor barn, yet our "heavenly Father feedeth them." He is always giving, so quietly that we are often unobservant of His bounty as of the silent dew; so regularly, that we notice His gifts more by their occasional seeming interruption than by their regular bestowment.

How marvellous is the supply of food throughout the ages for the support of man! Inorganic substances cannot feed him, but they are transmuted by an unfailing chemistry into vegetable products which

are fit nourishment for animals, and both become the food of man. But how is it that dead particles of earth and water and gas combine to form a plant, and arrange themselves into a complex organism which is itself alive? "There must be some power distinct from the force possessed by each particle, and superior to all, which directs the movements of each, as the general directs the movements of every soldier on the field. What is this power? You say it is Life. Yes, that is a beautiful word—but it means nothing unless it means pattern-forming mind. These wonders conduct us to the all-pervading Spirit of God, who 'maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.' It is not then a piece of poetry, but profoundest truth, when we say, It is God who 'giveth food to all flesh'" (E. White).

This was the great truth the Israelites were taught in the wilderness. Accustomed to the abundant stores of Egypt, they had no sooner entered the desert than they felt their helplessness. In answer to their cry the manna fell. Besides furnishing needful supplies, it taught their dependence on God for daily bread. "He fed thee with manna, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord." God showed that He could feed them independently of the Nile-flood and the corn of Egypt. By His command He could make the air distil this unknown product, and endow it with

nutriment to satisfy their hunger during forty years. Thus they were taught that ordinary food nourishes not by any inherent necessity, and, when they were settled in Caanan, that the produce of their own cornfields would, equally with the manna, be the gift of God. Our Lord, tempted to employ His miraculous power to relieve His hunger, quoted these words. Satan suggested that if He were indeed the Son of God, He had power to turn stones into bread. But He replied that man's life depends not on bread alone, but on God who gives bread and renders it nutritious, whose power can support life without it, whose favour therefore is life, and obedience to whose word is the life of life. If bread is effectual for food by the Word of God alone, how foolish as well as sinful to violate that word in order to obtain that food! "Better starve than go to the devil for provender." Our Lord placed Himself on our level. As man, He both suffered temptation and triumphed. He did not assert any special privilege, but as one of us He said, "It is written, Man"—all men, the race of mankind—"shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." That Word alone makes bread to nourish; and therefore the bread must be received as the gift of God, which can only really benefit when it is sought and received as such.

Other miracles besides that of the manna had reminded the Jews of the same truth. On two occasions Moses was supported during forty days

without food; Elijah was thus preserved in the desert; ravens brought him meat beside the brook; and the widow's barrel of meal wasted not. These facts showed that the Word of God could preserve life in other ways than by natural processes, which are equally the product of His Word. That Word brought the great multitude of fishes to the net of the disciples who had toiled for them all night in vain, and that Word multiplied the five small loaves to feed five thousand men. In the regular harvest no less than in the obvious miracle, the hand of God is at work. The comparatively small quantity of seed-corn resulting in the produce which feeds the whole multitude of mankind is the miracle of the loaves on a larger scale. Those miracles were "but flashes of light from the heavenly regions to illuminate our darkness—concentrated lessons, strongly-marked diagrams, to teach our dull minds that our heavenly Father gives us our earthly bread" (Saphir). Because God works by means, such as sunshine and rain; and because He ordains that we should be fed in connection with our own efforts in ploughing and sowing, men are apt to dwell on these second causes and forget Himself. The seed grows by the action of light and heat, of sun and rain; but it is He who ordains these influences. "He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." So as regards our own exertions. Faculty of thought, invention, contrivance; power of will, resolution,

perseverance; strength of arm, mechanical skill,—all these come from Him, and therefore He is the Giver of all they produce. "Say not in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth."

"One day I asked the children in our infant school, Who gives you the bread you get to your dinner? Almost every voice answered, '*My mother.*' But who gave it to your mother? '*The baker.*' And who gave it to the baker? '*The miller.*' And who gave it to the miller? '*The farmer.*' And who gave it to the farmer? '*The ground.*' And only when I asked, Who gave it to the ground? did I get the answer, 'It was God.'" (J. H. Wilson). How many children of a larger growth attribute their blessings to any second cause rather than to the gift of their Father! When the food has been produced we still need to say, "Give." The field may be golden with corn, but there may be no fit weather for harvesting it. The barn may be filled with grain which the mould may corrupt or the fire consume. Throughout the year and every day of it the beautiful prayer is appropriate, "Give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them." And when thus preserved we need to say, Give; for it is by the Word of God alone that the grain can nourish. We might have no appetite to desire it, no power to digest it, no health to enjoy it. For all this we need to say, *Father, Give!*

III.—The Gift—"Daily Bread."

The word rendered "daily" occurs nowhere in Greek literature, and is found only in the Lord's Prayer. It does not refer to the future. Our Lord taught on the same occasion, "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The meaning is *seasonable*, bread suited to our need. "Thus ἐπιούσιος will be '*required for our subsistence*,' equivalent to the things needful to the body'" (Alford). "The idea of fitness for a purpose and of actually serving it are united in the closest manner. The 'daily' stands in the middle between the past and the future, and designates that *which is just enough*" (Tholuck).

Honour is here given to food as the appointed means of nourishment. How little they reverence God who, in professing to pay Him homage, regard any of His works as in themselves to be despised! How contrary to the teaching of the Bible are the cave of the hermit and the cell of the monk, and how inevitable is the revolt from such unnatural restraint! Unfallen man needed and was supplied with food in Paradise. It was not eating which caused his fall, but disobedience. Angels did not refuse to eat the food provided by Abraham and by Lot. Our Lord was not only sustained during His human life by the food of man, but shared it after His resurrection. Having on their way to Emmaus fed the souls

of the two favoured believers, He "sat at meat with them, and took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave it to them." Later in that evening of that first day of Resurrection, He said unto the assembled disciples, "Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb. And He took it and did eat before them." As a sanction to that fellowship in food which so tends to kindle sympathy, when He confirmed Peter in his apostleship by the charge, "Feed my sheep," He said, "Come and dine. Jesus then taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise."

Religion sanctifies common life. "Godliness is profitable unto all things." The body is not only the lodging place of the soul, "but the temple of the Holy Ghost." To supply it with food, to protect it from harm and dishonour—this is a religious duty, not so important as caring for the soul, but deriving its authority from the same source, and therefore not to be neglected. We glorify God not by ignoring the nature He gave and which Christ shared, but by nourishing it as the dwelling and instrument of the soul. We are to "glorify God in our body" as well as "in our spirit, which are His"; equally His, and therefore each, in its degree, to be cared for according to His purpose in regard to each.

Godliness was never intended to make a separation between our earthly and our spiritual life, but between both and sin; teaching us, not to distinguish things secular from things sacred, but to make all things

sacred by faith and love; not to expect to secure happiness in heaven by giving ourselves pain on earth, as though the feast of eternity could be purchased by the fast of time, but, except where conscience intervenes, thankfully to use God's gifts for the "life that now is," as well as for "that which is to come." But while the necessities of the body are recognised, we are taught to be content with what is sufficient for our need, and not to desire what shall furnish our luxury. It is bread that we are taught to ask. And though we may regard this term as comprehending whatever else we may need for the present life, yet it does suggest the simplest kind of provision.

Here then is a lesson of contentment, and a warning against extravagance. We are not to ask God for that which is merely to please the palate. Whatever He gives we may use in moderation and gratitude, but we are not instructed to *ask* for more than daily bread. How often has undue pampering of appetite led Christians astray! "We had two common parents, Adam and Noah, and one failed in *eating*, and the other in *drinking*. These sins are natural to us. The throat is a slippery place, and had need be looked unto" (Manton). The apostle lamented the failures thus caused in the early Church: "For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose god is the belly." Some crave luxuries for ostentation. They must keep pace with society, and not be outdone by their neighbours. Wholesome food, reasonable

variety, moderate expenditure suited to their means,—this is not enough for them. Viands are valued the more, the less they are seasonable; not for their suitableness, but for their rarity. Social intercourse cannot be enjoyed without a prodigal waste on one feast which may cripple the resources of the family for weeks to come, or may exceed the amount spent in bread for the hungry poor during a whole year. What a sarcasm on some of the feasts of professing Christians would be, as grace before meat, the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread"!

The prayer simply for "daily bread" which forbids extravagant waste, may suggest the question how far it is consistent to destroy as food the grain bestowed, and turn it into that which in many cases destroys life, besides producing poverty, disease, vice, crime and misery. Mr. William Hoyle, author of *Our National Resources*, gives the following statistics: "The average annual amount spent on intoxicating drinks during the ten years 1870 to 1881 was £134,103,461. In the manufacture 80,000,000 bushels of grain have been destroyed each year, *i.e.* 4,240,000,000 lbs. of food, or a total in twelve years of 50,880,000,000 lbs. This would supply the entire population with bread for four years and five months. The grain thus destroyed yearly would make 1,200,000,000 4 lb. loaves; requiring 750 bakeries producing 500 loaves each hour, and working ten hours daily during the whole year. To grow the grain to manufacture the liquor consumed yearly would take a cornfield of more

than 2,000,000 acres; or it would cover the entire counties of Kent, Surrey, Middlesex, and Berkshire." Dr. Norman Kerr, in an address to the British Medical Association in August 1882, stated as the result of very careful investigation, that the drink thus obtained by the destruction of food was the cause annually of 40,500 deaths from personal intemperance—and of 79,500 others consequent on the intemperance of others.[1] Does not the prayer, "Give us suitable bread," seem incongruous with this misuse of so much of the bread already bestowed for daily sustenance?

Let not those who have only "daily bread" repine. The apostle, who knew "both to be full and to be hungry," said, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." A crust gratefully received from God is a richer feast than the costliest banquet which He does not bless. "The bread God carves, though a lesser slice, has a heavenly excellence when taken with content. The love of God makes its relish sweet" (Watson). Better "a dinner of herbs," where such love is, "than a stalled ox" without it. God's crumb weighs more than the devil's loaf. "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

IV.—The Community of the Gift—"Us."

This word places us side by side with our fellow-men, and forbids us to pray selfishly. In asking bread

[1] *National League's Annual* for 1883, by R. Rae. The amount spent in 1896 was £148,972,230: ten millions more than in 1894.

for myself, I am taught to ask it for others. If I pray for my own interests merely, I do not pray scripturally, and therefore not acceptably. I cannot come to the Throne of Grace in the Lord's Name unless I come in the Lord's Spirit. "After this manner pray ye, Give *us*." As in the opening word, "*Our* Father," we are reminded of our common brotherhood, so in this word "us" we are taught our common dependence on the one Father's bounty. It would sound very strangely if a family were gathered together, and one of the members prayed, "Give *me* this day *my* daily bread." And so we learn by this petition that the human race is one family, and that we must not isolate ourselves from our brethren by seeking good things for ourselves alone. We may learn a lesson from the ants. They store up food as a common stock, each for all. Suppose a few, stronger than the rest, appropriated the largest portion of the supply, so that, though there was ample provision for the daily sustenance of all, large numbers of ants in the same home perished with hunger; it could not be said that they perished from want of food for the many, but from the selfishness of the few. Mankind are a community, and the universal Father provides abundantly for all. If one kind of food may fail, other kinds supply the lack. If there is dearth in one land, there are plentiful harvests elsewhere. There is always food enough sent by the Father for the great "*us*." Ought there to be destitution among any?

During a recent war there was at one time an open-

air enclosure where thousands of captured soldiers were confined within strong stockades, closely guarded. Within this barrier the prisoners were at liberty. Each day food was carried within the gates, just sufficient for them all. But there was no attempt at equable distribution. Thus the strong and selfish made a rush at the common store, taking more than their due share, while many of the sick and wounded obtained nothing. Morning by morning scores of corpses were carried out. Had those sharers of a common captivity all acted in the spirit of the word "us," none would have died from want. Two hundred persons sail in a vessel with ample stores which are under the control of a few, who deal out only to themselves. The rest pine with hunger, and every day some lifeless bodies are dropped with funeral services into the deep. The ship's company assemble daily for prayers, and the captain leads their devotions with "Our Father, give *us* bread!" We are all sailing together over life's ocean, and God has provided ample stores. Are we then to bid all men share alike? Political Communism would soon produce universal want by destroying capital, discouraging industry, promoting indolence, rewarding vice. If all were equal in capacity, and equally intent on fulfilling each his part, the case might be different. Thus angels share together, no one of them having his own property, but each possessing all. Although this cannot yet be so on earth, every man should remember there are moral obligations he may not neglect, which

bind him to care for others while seeking bread for himself. So the apostle taught, "Look not every one on his own things, but every one also on the things of others."

Primitive believers did actually once practise a community of goods. But this was never enjoined, and soon came to an end. It could not work in an imperfect society. It exposed to such temptations as destroyed Ananias and Sapphira, and would soon have pauperized the Christian society by making it the prey of hypocrisy. We afterwards read of both wealthy and poor saints. But the principle holds good, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own." It is still true that nothing we possess is absolutely our own, but a stewardship, and ours conditionally on keeping in mind that we are "every one members one of another." Worldly governments enforce the rights of property; the Christian Church teaches its duties too. Perhaps in supporting the State by defending the rights of property it has sometimes performed a superfluous work, while not sufficiently diligent in its own special function. Governments cannot impose laws of love. The terms are self-contradictory in the mouth of the magistrate. Human laws are precise, rigid, enforced. Love is free, and its promptings cannot be excited or limited by legislation. The Kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and while it recognises the rights of property, insists chiefly on love to use it

generously. "Whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?"

"The Church proclaims tacitly by her existence—she should have proclaimed openly by her voice—that property and rank are held upon this tenure; that they can stand by no other. Alas! she has not spoken out this truth clearly and strongly here or anywhere." The consequence of such failure in duty is lack of power. "She can scarcely make her voice heard against schemes for reducing all things to a common stock, for establishing a fellowship upon a law of mutual selfishness, because she has not believed that the polity of brethren confessing a common Father is a real one—has left people to fancy that it is only a fine dream, a cruel mockery, incapable of bringing any tangible blessings. . . . If we had understood that we were children of one Father, and were asking Him to bless all the parts of His family while we were seeking blessings for ourselves, that, in fact, we could not pray at all without praying for them, we should have found the answer in a new sense of fellowship between all classes" (Maurice). We are reminded of this community whenever we say, "Give *us*." Masters, kneeling with their servants, are thus admonished to "give unto their servants that which is just and equal." Employers of labour are reminded that beyond the working of Political Economy there are duties of brotherhood; and they should be ashamed

and afraid of accumulating a fortune, while those who help to make it, well-nigh starve, though receiving the "market price" of their toil. Landowners, kneeling with their tenants and acting out the spirit of this word, would not require more than the land can fairly yield, whatever the competition for the tenancy, and would not allow their brothers who plough the soil to live in hovels where they would be ashamed to stable their horses. Grinding competition in trade would cease. The "Song of the Shirt" would no longer syllable the inarticulate groaning from garret and cellar; nor would haggard children be employed in making match-boxes for twopence-halfpenny the gross. The intelligent recognition of this principle would influence international relations. The whole world would be regarded as the Almighty Father's store-house, as well as the dwelling-place of His children. What He provides in one country would be considered the property of all, and no artificial restriction would be placed on commerce to prevent the free circulation of His gifts. Had this principle been recognised, there would never have been laws for the exclusive supposed benefit of a class, while the millions were starving within sight of plenteous harvests across a narrow strait, or an imaginary line.

As in the next petition they who ask to be forgiven must themselves forgive, so in this we learn that those who ask God to give must themselves be willing to give. We stand in His presence together with the sick, the aged, the sorrowful, the hungry, and we say,

"Give *us!*" We are one company, we plead for each other, and God gives bread enough and to spare. Only He does not divide it into portions for each, but confers on those who have abundance the honour and privilege of acting as His commissariat. Can we intelligently and honestly say, "Give *us*," and then practically live as though we had only said, "Give *me*"? Are we not bound to help our brethren who, when we utter this word, may be regarded as kneeling with us? "Charge them that are rich in this present world" (and riches are comparative; he that has two loaves being rich in relation to him who has not a slice); charge the rich "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life,"—the life which is life indeed. God gives to His children more than they need for themselves, to exercise in them the grace of giving, and to open to them the opportunity of a special reward. He who gives wealth "is able to make all grace abound," including this special grace of giving; so that "having all sufficiency in all things, we may abound unto every good work: as it is written, He hath scattered abroad: He hath given to the poor, His righteousness abideth for ever." It is He who "supplieth seed to the sower," and we should pray that "He would both supply bread for food," bread which we ourselves need, "and multiply our seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of our righteousness."

In receiving from God we are on a level with our needy brethren; but when we are enabled to relieve their wants, we are sharers with God Himself, the universal Giver.

"Of Thine own have we given Thee, O Lord." We are His almoners,—His hand to distribute the daily store. Our Lord illustrated such beneficence: "He went about doing good;" and we are to remember His words, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is more blessed, for there is more conscious pleasure in giving; there is more profit, for it benefits the soul of the giver, while the bread may only feed the body of the receiver; what is secured by the giver is more lasting than the gift, because the benefit to the soul abides when the garment given is worn out, the bread eaten, and the money spent; there is a richer reward from God, for though grateful receiving is acceptable to Him, yet special promises are recorded for those who generously bestow. Jesus regards the bread given to a poor disciple as given to Himself. A "cup of cold water given in His Name will not lose its reward," and He will say to those who with true love have ministered to others—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Thus the poor and the rich are mutually helpful. If the rich help the poor by material benefaction, the poor help the rich on a still higher scale in affording them the opportunity of increasing their spiritual wealth both here and hereafter, and of rendering

special service to their Lord. This is the true community of bread.

V.—The Conditions of the Gift—"Our."

1. *Honesty.*—God's bread cannot become our own in any true sense when we obtain it by dishonest means. We do not in such a case really ask it from God, nor does He give it. It is a seizure by us, not a donation by Him. If we are providing for our wants by any species of fraud and exaction, or by trades which injure either the bodies or the souls of men, we may not consider that the bread we eat was given by our Father. We cannot ask a blessing on what is sure to entail a curse. "He that increaseth his estate by indirect means stuffs his pillow with thorns, and his head will lie very uneasy when he comes to die." Such wealth will prove "daggers of gold to stab us, ropes of silk to hang us. Though we tread the courts of the Lord and nail our ears to the pulpit; yet a false weight in our bag and a heavy hand will wipe off our title to 'our bread'; and our names too, if we repent not, out of the book of life" (Farindon).

2. *Industry.*—Intelligent prayer has regard to the Divine methods. It is His Will that bread should be the reward of labour. Adam was placed in the garden not simply to enjoy its produce, but "to dress it and to keep it." Idleness is the paradise of fools alone. The curse pronounced when man sinned was not labour itself, but the new conditions attending it. Man

would have been much more cursed had he been doomed to inactivity. "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread" has been the law of the Giver from the first. Satan goes where men stand idle for his most ready slaves. God's law, linking labour with bread, is a law of love. The Son of man honoured humble toil for daily maintenance. He of whom it was said, "Is not this the carpenter?" did not eat the bread of idleness during that long abode at Nazareth. In praying for bread we pray for health and strength to earn it, that by industry it may become fairly ours. The most distinguished patriarchs, lawgivers, and prophets were trained in humble toil. The Bible abounds in admonitions to industry. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." "Be diligent to know the state of thy flocks." "Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings," whereas "drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." Christians are instructed to "work with their own hands, that they may walk honestly and have lack of nothing." Prayer for bread linked with laziness is mockery. We truly pray, "Give us bread," when we truly pray, "Thy will be done."

Those whose circumstances raise them above the necessity of labour are not thereby discharged from the obligation to do some useful work. King Lemuel's model woman "eateth not the bread of idleness," though possessing fields and merchandise, with maidens to serve her. St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "When we were with you, this we

commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." He then "commands by the Lord Jesus" those who "walked disorderly, working not at all, but who were busy-bodies, with quietness to work and eat their *own bread*," as if no man by mere purchase could make it his own. If we would "eat our *own* bread," it must either be by manual toil in its production, or by rendering some equivalent service to the community. Of course children and infirm persons are exceptions; all others, however exalted in station, should, by some beneficial industry, earn their bread if they would regard it as their own. "Every man is to work for his food either directly or by commutation; for the gentleman cannot, at least worthily, obtain it otherwise than by redeeming it from the ploughman and the artificer, by compensation of other cares and pains conducible to public good. Sloth is the argument of a mind wretchedly mean, which disposeth a man to live gratis on the public stock as an insignificant cipher among men, as a burden of the earth, as a wen of any society, seeking aliment from it, but yielding no benefit or ornament thereto. A noble heart will disdain to subsist like a drone upon the honey gathered by others' labour, like a vermin to filch its food out of the public granary, or like a shark to prey on the lesser fry; but will one way or other earn his subsistence, for he that doth not earn, can hardly own his bread" (Barrow).

Such industry is not opposed to piety, but is a part of it. Religion has too often been regarded as

confined to mental exercises and acts of worship; and so the duties of common life have been regarded as a hindrance in the way to heaven. But when bread is sought from God, and strength for winning it is acknowledged as His gift and exercised according to His Will, then work becomes worship, and the most humble manual toil or the most engrossing mental labour is an acceptable sacrifice, being "sanctified by the word of God and by prayer." "Religion is not confined to the ear, nor is it a prisoner to so narrow a compass as to be shut up in the temple. If you will entertain her, she will come and dwell with you in your private houses and shops; she will walk with you in the streets and fields, and sit down with you at your meals. The husbandman, whilst he holds his plough, may chant forth a Hallelujah; they who work with their hands may sing the songs of Zion, and ease their labours and rouse up their spirits with this heavenly noise, as the mariners do when they draw up the anchor" (Jerome). "Religion will sit with the king on his throne and with the judge on the bench. It will accompany the preacher as well in his study as in the pulpit, and the tradesman as well in his shop as in the church" (Farindon).

VI.—The Period of the Gift—"This Day."

In St. Matthew we read *σήμερον, this day;* in St. Luke, *τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν, for the day,* or *day by day.* The meaning is the same. We are taught to ask needful

sustenance for each day as it comes, and not be anxious to lay up a store for the future, or ask God to provide more than for the necessities of the present time. "St. Matthew touches the readiness, St. Luke touches the steadiness; St. Matthew the promptitude, St. Luke the patience of God's supply" (Vaughan). Our Lord warned His disciples against anxiety respecting earthly things. Their Father, from whom they sought daily bread, would provide what He knew to be best. They must not therefore make it their chief aim to secure the wealth which perishes. The life's chief treasure possesses the heart's chief affections. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Therefore we are to take no anxious thought respecting food or raiment. God, who gave life, will not fail to bestow the lesser gift of food to sustain it. Anxiety cannot add to our stature, nor prolong our life. He who formed the body may be trusted for its dress. "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" To-day's wants, labours, sorrows, are enough for us to bear to-day; the morrow will bring its own needs and supplies. Therefore let us be content to ask from our Father "*this day* our daily bread."

Our Lord does not command us to neglect wise precautions. Instead of "Take no thought," the R. V. translates, "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow." The Bible never encourages indolence and improvidence. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; con-

sider her ways, and be wise: which provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it." In spring the distant autumn must be sown. The culture of youth lays the foundation for the work of manhood, and this for the support of age. The spendthrift must not plead our Lord's word as a palliative for self-indulgence; nor should religious enthusiasm close its eyes to reason and truth, and think to honour Christ's teaching by observance of the letter while violating the spirit. If we trust God, we shall accept His methods. But obedient industry and providence should be free from anxiety. Anxiety is useless. It is neither thoughtful contrivance nor practical diligence, but hinders both. We cannot think so clearly or work so effectually when the mind is perplexed with care, as when it enjoys the calm trustfulness of faith. The surgeon brings all his skill to the operation, but if the hand that holds the knife trembles, anxiety may be perilous to the patient. Especially is such anxiety mischievous when it forestalls to-morrow, for we cannot to-day do the morrow's work; and therefore care for the morrow, which cannot be practical, interferes with to-day's work, which demands all our energies. Such anxiety dishonours our Father. To Him all the future is known; whatever we shall need, and His own boundless store. The Israelites were taught by the manna to trust Him for to-morrow. If they stored it, it stank; they must

depend on God for new supplies "day by day." Poverty brings its special trials, but it may help to make its subjects "rich in faith" by encouraging daily dependence on God. When food for the next day must come from fresh exertion through the continuance of daily strength, it is easier to feel the appropriateness of this prayer than when he who offers it has property securely invested, or a thriving business.

For the richest also this petition is appropriate. Their wealth may vanish like a cloud, "real property" retain only a nominal value, investments become worth no more than the paper on which they are inscribed, and the very prosperity of business allure to ruin. Wings often grow out of wealth and bear it away. Such evolution is constantly going on. "Who is richer for a flock of wild fowls which pitcheth in a man's field to-night, but to-morrow they are gone?" Riches may fly away not only by their absolute loss, but by their ceasing to give satisfaction. The care of keeping, the fear of losing, the envy of others, the contentions of rival claimants, may make the possessor wish the wealth had flown. And the health to enjoy it depends daily on God. A believer "thinks the provision as good in God's hands as his own; and therefore asks not so much store laid up, as bread for to-day. If he has great wealth, he trusts no more in it than if he had nothing: and if he has bread for to-day and nothing for to-morrow, he trusts no less in God than if he had thousands" (Leighton).

The dependence of all alike on Providence is

illustrated by the limited produce of the earth's harvests. Every summer there is never enough corn in store for a year's consumption. Were the harvests of one year to fail, there would be universal famine. Of what value would bank-notes and title-deeds and gold and silver be to the wealthiest if there were no corn in the barn? The whole human family may well unite in the prayer, "Father, this day!" "This day" reminds us of the uncertainty of life. To store up for many years implies that we expect to live many years. To-morrow we may be beyond the need of earthly food. To the self-confident possessor of "much goods laid up for many years" the voice has often come, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be?" We hold our tenancy at will: the lease is daily renewed, and may at any moment lapse. We are not to pray for stores to lay up in an abode we may quit before morning. We thus find an emphatic warning against

COVETOUSNESS.

This petition reproves eagerness to amass wealth; the longing for more than is needful; craving for some additional advantages; leading to rapacity, over-reaching, hard-heartedness towards others. Our Lord classed "covetousness" with "adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, wickedness, deceit, pride, foolishness," as the evil things which "come from within and defile the man." When He was applied to respecting a disputed inheritance, He said, "Take heed and beware

of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." It is not the *things* which can enrich, nor the *abundance* of them; it is the soul itself which is the life; and this may be impoverished by amassing "*things*." St. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "Mortify your members which are upon the earth"; classing among such vices as "fornication and uncleanness" this one which he specially stigmatizes, "and covetousness, which is idolatry."

Many who are not greedy for dainties may be greedy for gold. This "love of money is a *root* of all kinds of evil; which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Such eagerness for more than "daily bread" renders the conscience dull in perceiving the boundary line of truth and justice, and leads to defective manufacture, adulterated stores, unfair advantage, misrepresentation, underpayment of service, indifference to the distress of others, refusal of imperative claims of benevolence. The covetous illustrate the pagan satire—"Money! honestly if you can, still, anyhow, money!" and what the Roman poet calls the "sacred hunger for gold." "They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts; such as drown men in destruction and perdition." Achan rises before us clutching his wedge of gold; Ahab murder-stained haunts Naboth's vineyard; Demas, "gibbeted by St. Paul," swings to and fro with this inscription,

"having loved the present world"; Judas flees from his still pursuing thirty pieces of silver,—these and multitudes of similar victims of greed warn us not to crave more than "daily bread."

Especially sad is the sight of an old man still grasping if not increasing his store. The long habit of the mind grows stronger as the faculty and opportunities of enjoying the wealth become less. The shorter the tenure, the closer the clutch. The less use for the hoard, the stronger bolt on the door. The nearer the judgment-seat, the longer the account to render, and the apparently greater eagerness to heap up condemnation. The writer heard Dean Farrar in Westminster Abbey relate how an old man near death was rubbing his hands together uneasily, when his son placed a bank-note in them, and he was pacified. He could not rest unless grasping at his wealth. It possessed him, rather than he it. They who are ambitious to "die rich" should remember that "we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." We all die alike penniless. Nay, they who die with wealth beyond all reasonable requirement of survivors, die the poorest, for, as stewards, they have a heavier account to render. Our real wealth is what we use wisely and and give generously; beyond this, riches impoverish. "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." The deposit is safe, the interest sure. Was not Lazarus in his rags richer than Dives in his purple? An old epitaph quaintly records: "What I spent I

had; what I kept I lost; what I gave I have." Philip Henry used to say, "He is no fool who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be recompensed with that which he cannot lose."

The folly of making wealth the great aim of life has been exposed by moralists in all ages, even though they may not have followed their own counsels. Lord Bacon says, "Seek not proud wealth, but such as you can get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, leave contentedly." A full table cannot secure a good appetite, nor a large bed sound sleep. "A great cage cannot always make a bird sing." Increase of estate brings increase of care. Abundance of "things" may be more a burden than a blessing. "One staff," says Leighton, "may help the traveller, whom a bundle of them will hinder."

> "Extol not riches then, the toil of fools,
> The wise man's hindrance, if not snare; more apt
> To slacken Virtue, and abate her edge,
> Than prompt her to do aught may merit praise."—MILTON.

A robe that not only covers the body but drags a gorgeous train behind, may be very troublesome to the possessor; and it is not every wearer who is skilful enough so to carry it that it shall not gather dirt and perhaps disease by its entangling folds, and cause an ignominious or dangerous fall. Things are seldom what they seem. "The learned pate ducks to the golden fool," but despises him in his heart, and his own weakness too for "ducking." The glamour that surrounds the owner of gold vanishes with the gold and leaves him in the gloom.

"Ah, when the means are gone that buy this praise,
The breath is gone whereof this praise is made."—SHAKESPEARE.

The jewelled crown is prettier to look at than easy to wear. More gold may bring more greed, more prosperity more pride, more fame more folly, greater revenue heavier reckoning. If with larger purse comes less peace, and with more bread more burden, we need not be eager to obtain more than suitable supplies for our need. Property has its advantages in the supply of comforts and innocent enjoyments, and chiefly as a means of doing good; we may therefore value it when it comes to us in the way of Providence, but should not make the acquiring it our great aim in life, even as we are encouraged to pray not for what is superfluous, but only for what is needful. This has been assured to us, and the Word of God should be to us more than an earthly treasure to secure us against want. "What the Christian hath not in the cupboard he hath in the promise" (Watson).

It is suitableness, not superabundance, that gives enjoyment. A dress that fits is more useful to the wearer than one which is too large, though more costly. A shoe that pinches the foot is not easier for all the gold lace put on it. Saul's armour was useless to David, who was far better equipped with his sling and his stone. Many who have climbed into great wealth have found their new surroundings so incongruous with their habits, that they have sighed for their "lowly roofed cottage again." He whose

condition is not suited to his desires, because those desires are never satisfied, is poorer than he who is contented with what he has.

"God prohibits us from confounding wealth and welfare. The normal condition of Christian service is the wage of 'bread and water'; and whatever is beyond that is a gratuity of the Master in heaven. . . . They who are at rest in the centre are 'rich towards God'; rich here, amid the toils and hardships of poverty: rich in the power of extracting, like the bee, honey from almost every flower, and of singing over their work,—rich in that holy love which makes the wear and tear of household life seem, not like the convict's trample on the world's vast treadmill, but like an ascent on the luminous steps of duty up to the very gate of heaven,—rich in the inward light of God's Spirit, which, passing through the eye as a prism, throws a sunny radiance of variegated beauty over the external scene" (E. White).

They whose poverty brings hunger may be consoled by remembering that our Lord Himself lived many years on daily bread supplied day by day through manual toil, that He knew the pangs of hunger, and how the tempter takes advantage of bodily weakness and privation. They whom "God hath chosen, rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom," need not envy those to whom He entrusts silver and gold. Every believer possesses more than all the wealth of which any Crœsus ever boasted, because God is his, and all God has to give. "For all things

are yours; the world, things present, things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The universe belongs to every child of His, not *although*, but *because* it is in the Father's keeping. From His infinite store He day by day selects and bestows on every child of His that which He knows to be most suitable. May we not as surely feel that we possess the whole when our Father gives us our portion day by day, as if we ourselves kept the key? Are not His choice and distribution likely to be more suited to our real welfare than if we selected for ourselves?

To possess God is to possess a treasure satisfying, enduring, infinite. No failure of earthly hopes can deprive a Christian of his inheritance. The writer was preaching on the sufficiency of God for a possession. A stranger in the congregation was overheard repeating to himself, "Forty thousand pounds." As he left the church he was again overheard saying in cheerful tones, "I'm glad I've lost it—I'll have God." "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked." If ever tempted to repine because some who are not the children of God "have more than heart could wish," he can say with Asaph, "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. My heart and

my flesh faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

VII.—Prayer for the Gift.

As we ask only for bread sufficient for the day, this prayer is obviously given us for daily use. In answer to the prayer of to-day, I receive bread for to-day; to-morrow's supply must be sought to-morrow from the same Father in heaven. Ever-recurring need renders necessary ever-renewed petitions. Though the highest privilege of the creature is to hold intercourse with the Creator, it would often be neglected did not necessity prompt. This constantly links earth's little things with heaven. Our Father's bounty never fails, but He would have His children's faith and gratitude nourished. "The tree of promise needs shaking by the hand of prayer." The fruit tastes the sweeter and is more nutritious when sought and received from God. He does not limit the approaches of His children to great crises at distant intervals, but would hear their voice each day. Not as the high priest once a year entering within the veil; not as the worshippers at the annual festivals; not even as those who on each weekly Sabbath went up to the temple for worship,—but day by day we are permitted to appear before Him. Thus graciously does our Father ordain that His children should never be long out of His company; that their need should be a spur to their devotion; that thus in coming to

Him for the Father's bread they may receive much more in a Father's blessing.

It is a social prayer, and implies a company of suppliants. This at once suggests the family. They share the daily supply, and thus are taught to seek it together. Family prayer is not a mere puritan usage, the peculiarity of a party; it is founded in the nature of man, and is universal in its reasonableness and obligation. How seemly, how beautiful, the daily worship of the gathered household; parents and children together looking up to heaven and saying, "Our Father, give us this day our daily bread"! How unnatural the opposite! Instead of any argument being needed in defence of family worship, argument is needed for the neglect of it. Public service in the church, however useful, should not interfere with this more ancient worship of the family. The early Christians met on the first day of the week to commemorate the Resurrection. As circumstances permitted, they might assemble in the church more frequently. But each family necessarily met every day to partake of food, and so they met for worship daily, asking and receiving that food from their Father. There is no such argument for daily service in the church, however profitable, as there is for daily worship in the family; and so far as the former discourages the latter, its claims become questionable. The worship of the household precedes that of the congregation, and the priesthood of the Family has a more ancient title than that of the Church. Enforcing this truth, the late

Dean Alford of Canterbury condemned the practice of the head of a household surrendering his position at family worship to a clergyman, who there is officially inferior, "and without any dispute the less is blessed of the better."

The pious practice of "grace before meat" is encouraged by this petition. If we ask for food each day, so when we receive it we should give thanks for it. This should not degenerate into a mere fashionable form, but, however brief, should be solemn and earnest. Are we much better than sheep and goats, who just live to eat, if we do not acknowledge the Giver of our food? The beasts of the field unconsciously "seek their meet from God," and we show our superiority to them when with reverence and gratitude we ask our Father for our daily bread. "Carnal men are like swine which raven upon the acorns, but look not up to the oak whence they drop." In this giving of thanks we have the emphatic example of our Lord when He exerted His miraculous power in multiplying the loaves, no less than when at Emmaus "He took bread and blessed it." His giving thanks for the bread He had created seems to have impressed the mind of St. John quite as much as the miracle. "Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks." The place was specially signalized by the fact of this "grace before meat." If then the Lord Himself gave thanks for bread He had provided by His Divine power, how much

more should we who are entirely dependent on Him for it!

Such prayer for bread is fraught with spiritual benefit. It teaches us *humility*. How preposterous for those to be proud who are daily petitioners for the very bread they eat! As the heathen king said to those who flattered him as a god, "I require sleep every night, I know I am not a god" (Saphir). We cannot claim as a right what we ask as a gift. Whatever as creatures we might have expected from the Creator has been forfeited by sin. It is only to mercy we may appeal. "By grace we stand" in regard to the body as well as to the soul. We may say with the patriarch, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant." Not worthy therefore of the plainest, scantiest fare, not worthy of our daily bread, for which we therefore humbly petition as suppliant children, saying, "*Father, give!*"

It encourages *filial confidence* in little things. Some Christians seem as if they could trust God for eternal life and not for daily bread. This prayer is a constant monitor, bidding them "cast *all* their care on Him who careth for them." Believingly to say "*Give*" is the cure of care. Were we left to our own exertions, or were forbidden to appeal to God except for spiritual blessings, we might yield to anxiety; but when we are encouraged to unburden our hearts to Him in little things as well as large, we may leave the caring to Him. So the apostle teaches—"In everything

be without anxiety: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." Do we rejoice that He gave His Son, and shall we not trust Him to give us bread? In addition to the plea that He is our Creator, we possess a covenant claim through Christ, by whom all things are ours. Grand as well as simple was that "grace before meat" of the poor woman, "Lord, I thank Thee for the porridge; I thank Thee for an appetite for the porridge; I thank Thee for a *covenant-right* to the porridge."

It prompts to *daily gratitude*. How small will be our tribute of praise if we render it only when we receive some extraordinary benefit! Our greatest mercies are the small but regular supplies for each day's small but essential requirements. What we distinctly ask, we are more likely consciously to receive from our Father's hand. A crust over which thanks are given and a blessing craved, becomes a richer repast than the costliest fare not received as a royal gift.

Daily obedience.—With faculties each day invigorated by daily bread from His hand we shall pray, "O Lord, our heavenly Father, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day, grant that this day we fall into no sin; but that all our doings may be ordered by Thy governance, to do always that that is righteous in Thy sight."

Although this petition asks food for the body, yet it suggests that which is needed for the soul. Our Lord often spoke of the one as a type of the other. "I am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." He compared eating bread with faith in Himself; for as merely crediting the existence and nutritive qualities of bread will not nourish the body unless the bread is eaten, so it is necessary that Christ Himself be spiritually received into the heart. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

In the ordinance of the Supper the Lord honoured bread by using it as an emblem of His body; the body which once shared our infirmities, including hunger; but which is now glorified on the heavenly throne. How such a solemn association ought to lead us to honour food, not despising it as mean nor abusing it by excess! Therefore when we offer this prayer in its primary sense, seeking what is needful for the bodily life, let us also ask for the nourishment of the soul, daily reception of Christ by faith, daily nourishment of the soul by faith, daily instruction by the Truth, daily aid of the Spirit, daily grace for whatever need each day may bring. For past supplies will no more suffice for the soul than for the body.

As we cannot live healthily to-day on yesterday's bread, and without a fresh supply must soon die, so our spiritual health begins to decline when it loses one day's aliment; and death will come to the soul that trusts to religious experiences of a year ago, as surely as it would to the body if we substituted dreams of former feasts for present daily bread.

Father, throned in heaven above,
Might and Mercy, Light and Love!
Give to us, as Jesus said,
Day by day our daily bread.

Satisfy our daily need,
Soul and body daily feed,
Daily hear us when we pray,
Succour, save us, day by day.

Give us daily faith to ask
Needful aid for daily task,
Daily guidance on our way,
Daily warning, lest we stray;

Sympathy for daily grief,
Daily solace and relief,
Daily patience, meekness, zeal,
Hearts for others' woes to feel;

Daily help for daily cross,
Daily gain in seeming loss,
Daily strength for daily strife,
Daily grace till close of life.—N. H.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIFTH PETITION.

"AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS."

IT has been remarked, that whereas the first three petitions might be offered by angels as well as by men, and the fourth would have been suitable for the devotions of Eden, the fifth and the sixth are suited only for sinners. The word "forgive" is the first sad note sounded in this litany. In jubilant tones we may ask that our Father's name may be hallowed, His Kingdom come, His Will be done, and His daily gifts bestowed, but here we approach His Throne as guilty suppliants, seeking mercy. The little word "and" has a great significance, linking the prayer for bread with that for pardon. I have forfeited as a rebel my claim as a creature. Bread has little value under sentence of death. "Father, feed me! but at the same time pardon me! Give us bread and forgive our debts."

Man has three chief necessities: bread for the body; quiet for the conscience; righteousness for the soul; —and these three wants we urge in the last three petitions. With every lawful claim of the body fully

met, the conscience may be oppressed with guilt. There can be no peace without pardon. This has been recognised under all forms of religion. Prehistoric cromlechs, Egyptian monoliths, Grecian temples, Gothic spires, all utter the prayer "Forgive," or at least ask, "What must I do to be saved?" Penance, sacrifice, oblation, supplication, in all their varied forms, have ever acknowledged man's sense of sin, his fear of punishment and need of pardon.

I.—Sin considered as a Debt to God.

The words "sin" and "debt" are interchanged, as if synonymous. St. Luke describes not only as *sin* what St. Matthew describes as *debt*, but connects the forgiveness of our *sins* with our own remission of our fellow-creatures' *debts*. A debt is what is due; what we owe; "oughtness." We ought to render to God all righteousness, and this is a debt due from every being endowed with a moral nature. St. Paul says, "We are debtors, not to the flesh"; implying that we are debtors to God, to live according to His Spirit, and thus to fulfil His purposes in the creation of our own spirit. This obligation to be holy we do not ask to have remitted. "Abatement of rent" may often be equitably asked between man and man, but there can be no lowering of the claims of a perfectly righteous God without dishonour to Himself and injury to His creatures. We ought not to desire it. It would be impossible for God to grant it. His

law is a transcript of His perfect Will. To wish for a lower standard would be unworthy of ourselves as well as of Him. It is the glory of man to recognise this obligation, to confess this debt. But we have failed to discharge it, and so have incurred the penalty of disobedience. This includes the displeasure of God. If He delights in holiness, He must regard its opposite with displeasure. No one can be perfectly good who does not hate evil. Besides this, sin injures the sinner's own nature and exposes him to the righteous retribution of the Law. Having failed in duty, we have incurred penalty, and this debt is due to God.

Many sins are committed against ourselves. Abuse of natural faculties brings its own punishment, the constitution impaired, disease contracted, and life shortened. Indolence entails penury, and dissipation social disgrace and a premature grave. Also every sin dishonours, though it may not destroy the body which is the agent of it. The tongue is disgraced by every false and injurious word, the hand by every evil deed, the foot by every step taken in the service of a corrupted will. The intellect is degraded by thoughts of wickedness, the imagination when its lofty powers are impressed in the mean servitude of vice. Who can estimate the suicidal injury to conscience, when dragged from its viceregal throne, and gagged lest it utter its indignant protests; the damage and dishonour to the grand nature God gave us, when, contrary to His purpose, we compel the higher to serve the lower instincts, and bind reason to the chariot-wheels of lust!

The physical consequences of violating natural laws are not obviated by my repentance. Self-reproach however sincere, tears however plentiful, will not restore a shattered constitution. Laments for past folly will not call back the wasted property, and regrets however poignant will not regain the social position once forfeited. If they could, the damage done to my moral nature would remain, and memory would never lose the record. In sinning against myself, I have sinned still more against my Maker. Could I neutralize the evil consequences, or accept and submit to them, I should still be a debtor to God. My body and mind belong to Him as their Maker; therefore by injuring myself I injure His property; by violating the laws of my own being I rebel against the Author of those laws.

Even the lower animals have rights, our violation of which creates a debt to God. Man is lord of the lower animals to use them for his need, not to torture them for his pleasure. To urge them to labour beyond their strength, to treat them with coward tyranny or heartless negligence, to kill them not for necessary food but for the pleasure of killing, cannot be according to the Will of that beneficent Creator who gave them physical sensitiveness for their good, a sensitiveness which we share and therefore should respect. If there are many who feel with the poet,—

> "I would not enter on my list of friends,
> Though graced with polish'd manners and fine sense
> Yet wanting sensibility, the man
> Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm;"

much less can the universal Father regard as friends those who deliberately torment the creatures which with ourselves are the objects of His care. The Israelites, when delivered from the cruel oppression of Egypt, were taught compassion to God's inferior yet not uncared-for creatures. The fallen ass or ox was to be lifted up, and the mother-bird sitting on the young or on the eggs was to be set free. The Son of God said, "Your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." It is vain to plead that they are our own property; they are God's supremely, and ours only as stewards who must render account, and answer for all debts incurred by violation of the Will of Him who is their Protector and our Judge.

> "But many a crime, deem'd innocent on earth,
> Is register'd in heaven; and these, no doubt,
> Have each their record, with a curse annex'd.
> Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,
> But God will never."—COWPER.

More obviously, all offences against our fellow-men are debts to God. Wrongs to the *property* of our neighbour include not only wilful injury and open robbery, but all unfairness, however sanctioned by the customs of trade and disguised by terms of political economy. Oppression of the labourer by inadequate wages, or defrauding of the employer in the quality of the work; misrepresentations or unrighteous suppression of the truth in commercial

transactions; depreciation of goods when we purchase, exaggeration when we sell; advantage taken of distress; debts incurred without reasonable prospect of payment; speculation with the property of others without their consent; withholding what is due when we possess the means of payment; all swell our debts to God. To these are to be added wrongs to our neighbour's *reputation:* not only by inventing calumnious charges and bearing false witness, but by "taking up a reproach against our neighbour"; by finding pleasure in giving currency to coin minted by others bearing some injurious charge, without any endeavour to certify its truth, and not knowing but it may be altogether false; thus entailing on him possibly loss of property, together with that of the good opinion and perhaps the friendship that he values more than gold. Wrongs to his *person* include not only acts of violence, but threats which may disturb his peace, and angry and unkind words which may provoke or grieve him. How often has a sarcastic speech been a lifelong sore, a passionate invective more bruising than any blow, a proud or chilling look an abiding heart-grief! To these are to be added faults of omission. As brethren invoking the same Father, we are bound to show brotherly kindness to each other. Alas for the lost opportunities of helping the needy, tending the sick, cheering the sad, encouraging the timid, warning the foolish, saving the lost! How many might have been rescued from sinking in despair by one kindly

word! How many might have been brought back to virtue and God by one helping hand-grasp!

"Alas! I have walked through life
Too heedless where I trod;
Nay, helping to trample my fellow-worm,
And fill the burial sod—
Forgetting that even the sparrow falls
Not unmarked of God!
The wounds I might have healed!
The human sorrow and smart!
And yet it never was in my soul
To play so ill a part:
But evil is wrought by want of Thought,
As well as want of Heart."—HOOD.

Can we plead that all the evil we have done and all the good we have neglected were never intentional? Alas for the money, time, influence which have been employed merely for self-pleasing; the much we have spent extravagantly or hoarded covetously compared with the little given, and that often grudgingly! And when we consider the priceless treasure of the gospel committed to us to communicate to others, how great becomes the debt in our neglect of opportunities! This debt to our neighbours we cannot discharge nor they remit. In most cases the injury cannot be redressed. The slander has spread from mouth to mouth, and no published refutation can overtake it. The occasion for doing a kindness cannot recur. Other opportunities will arise, but that one is gone for ever. Many whom we have wronged are out of reach. But could they be all convened and their forgiveness obtained, the debt against God would remain. The "false balance" was "abomination to the Lord."

"The hire of the labourers kept back by fraud crieth" to heaven against the oppressor; "and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Every wrong to man is a sin against man's Maker. David's great crime was an incalculable injury to the individual wronged, and to the whole nation whom his example had so dishonoured and whose respect for law it had so weakened. But his sense of the wrong done to his fellow-creatures was overshadowed by the still greater wrong done to God. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." Above the human law is the Divine Will which appoints it, and which demands payment of the debt.

To these must now be added sins directly against God. The cherished purpose of evil is a sin against the Searcher of hearts. The permitted idea, the allowed wish, bears with it the character of the act. Thus the lustful passion is adultery, and the cherished revenge is murder. How great the debt thus accumulated in the records of Him who "pondereth the hearts"! We owe to Him habitual reverence, cheerful obedience, constant gratitude, filial trust, devout worship. This we should render every day. Alas! how often we have forgotten God altogether, received His gifts without thankfulness, murmured at His dispensations, disobeyed His laws! What excuses we have made for setting aside His authority, for resisting the voice of conscience, for pleasing ourselves! When we think of His love in redemption,

our neglect of such mercy is an additional debt. How often we have refused to listen to the voice of Jesus! How often we have grieved the Spirit of God by not heeding His persuasions, by resisting His inward striving! If our chief end is to glorify God, how much of life has been abused! "Sins of omission, of which many think little, are far the larger half and no less deadly, even as hunger, if unfed, is no less deadly than sickness" (Hare). "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

Sins against God may be illustrated by the word "debts" for the following reasons:—They are *entered in His books.* Conscience is one of these, and its records are sternly kept. All sins against God are wounds on ourselves, and leave their mark. Divine Justice is another book; the record in the mind of Him "from whom no secrets are hid," and who "will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." "The books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." A record is being kept unobserved by us. As a traveller calls for what he needs at his hotel, and no demand is made at the time for payment, though every item is carefully recorded, so it is with our daily incurred debts against God. Sins record themselves. As a multitude entering some place of resort pass individually through the turnstile, and a record is unerringly made, out of sight of the visitor; and as mechanical contrivances in

factories register every beat of the piston and every fraction of the result produced, so, by the law of God impressed on our own nature, all our actions are registered, all our debts recorded. *They increase;* not merely by the addition of new sins but by accretions to the old debt, as interest and compound interest in human transactions. Non-repentance for a sin committed and non-renunciation of it augment the amount. Every day's delay not only increases the old fault, but renders more easy its repetition. If committed and not renounced, such a seed is prolific after its own kind. One sin also often begets another of a different kind, as falsehood to conceal vice, as murder to destroy evidence. It also produces increased alienation from God. As a man in debt, without either the ability or inclination to pay it, avoids the presence of his creditor, and often cherishes towards him ill-will, so an impenitent sinner, conscious of guilt, increasingly shuns the thought of the God he has offended. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Thus, like earthly debts, sin ever tends to augment its amount and degree.

These debts *can never be discharged.* Who can adequately estimate the evil of sin as committed against the Sovereign Ruler, by obedience to whom the happiness of intelligent beings can be alone secured? Our Lord indicated the greatness of our debt in the parable of the unforgiving servant, who, unrelenting to his debtor of one hundred pence, owed his lord ten thousand talents and was unable to pay.

In vain we say, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay Thee all"; since all that is in our power to render is due each day, and the payment of it would leave the former debt undiminished. There can be no "composition with the Creditor," no "payment by instalments"; the debts are recorded, are ever augmenting, and can never be paid.

They cannot be transferred to any fellow-creature. No friend can interpose and say, "Put that to my account," since each is equally unable to pay his own debt. There is no treasury of good works in the keeping of the Church which can be allotted as a set-off; for the Church is composed of members every one of whom has incurred a debt he has not discharged, and therefore there can be no balance in favour of the aggregate; no works of supererogation when every member of the Church has come short in ordinary duty. We ask that God would forgive "*our* debts." Ours they emphatically are, and can belong to us alone. Adam laid the blame on Eve, Eve on the serpent. Faults are attributed to organization, external circumstances, companionships, prevalent customs, the devil, or fate. But if the action were voluntary, our will made it our own. Unless God deliver us, we must carry our burden or be crushed beneath it.

These are *debts we cannot escape* by *lapse of years.* There is no "Statute of Limitations" which annuls them after a certain period. If unforgiven, they are valid at the end of the longest life. David in old age prayed, "Remember not the sins of my youth."

We cannot escape them by *change of residence.* To whatever country we migrate, we carry with us this burden. We cannot go beyond the reach of the King's writ. "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning and dwell at the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." We cannot escape them by *death.* This event cancels human debts, but only sums up the account with heaven. "Death is God's arrest." Payment *will be claimed.* It is not a nominal debt, recorded but never to be exacted. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." A day is coming to each with the summons, "Give an account of thy stewardship." It may seem delayed, but is surely approaching. "After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." How wretched men may be when they know themselves encumbered with financial obligations they cannot meet! Their seeming prosperity, by contrast with their real circumstances, aggravates their distress. The comfortable house, the costly furniture, the pictures, the grounds, the consideration paid them on account of their supposed wealth, seem to mock them. How ill at ease they feel in the presence of their creditor; in what daily apprehension they live; how a knock at the door, or the arrival of a letter, may startle them; what a burden is this debt, whatever the time granted for payment; what a relief when it is cleared off! So

is it with sinners. They carry a heavy load which impedes their progress and destroys their comfort. They are tied and bound by a chain which hinders their activity. So they try to dismiss the memory of the debt, as if by forgetting they could be quit of it. The record may be written in invisible ink, but it is written, and at any moment may become terribly legible. Yes, we must give account for "duties unfulfilled, holy relationships neglected, days wasted, evil thoughts cherished, talents hidden, light within turned to darkness. So speaks the conscience; in some it may be a feeble voice, soon lost in the noises of the outward world. In others, it is loud and terrible, followed by a reaction of fierce merriment or sleep. In some it is a low but perpetually sounding knell, witnessing of a death begun and going on in themselves. . . . These obligations sit like nightmares upon him, stop his breathing, hold him chained. Why cannot he cast them from him as dreams of the night? They come back with fearful distinctness; every circumstance, look, tone, clearly recorded; it is no dream of the night. What signifies it that years have passed away? The act is gone, but thou art still the same. The act is gone into Eternity, and there it will meet thee" (Maurice).

The writer once conversed with a man who had been recently rescued from seeming death by drowning. He described his vain efforts to keep afloat, then his gradual sinking till he lay flat at the bottom. In a moment his whole life seemed to pass before him in

review. Scenes and actions long unthought of stood out vividly on the canvas of memory. Then he saw his deliverer diving down for him, and lost further consciousness. The man who rescued him had plunged after him within a few seconds of his sinking. Thus in the case of every one, debts long ago forgotten may in a moment start into life and demand payment. Full of solemn warning is the word of Abraham to Dives, "Son, remember!" Even in the present life many say, "The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable." But if, even till death, a sinner remains unconvinced of guilt, his unconsciousness of debt does not alter the fact. Many a man is insolvent without knowing it. Carelessly or wilfully ignorant, he goes on blindly in reckless expenditure without considering whether his income can meet it. He neglects to take stock till sudden ruin overtakes him. "O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end!"

The vastness of our debt to God has often been overlooked in the light of the gospel which proclaims remission. But we cannot rightly appreciate the pardon without a due sense of the sin; as only those conscious of sickness seek the physician, their earnestness in applying to him and their recognition of cure being in proportion to their sense of pain or peril. When sin is regarded as a trifle, the atoning sacrifice is undervalued or altogether denied. A light estimate of past sin will render us less watchful in the future. If the debt already incurred can be easily set aside,

no great harm need be feared from fresh trespasses. If our violation of God's law were excusable error and not a debt recorded, indelible, augmenting, beyond all power of ours to discharge, and which will be brought against us in judgment, such repentance as the Word of God describes would be excessive, and such a provision as the gospel announces for its remission would be unnecessary.

II.—The Debts of God's Pardoned Children.

Can they who are forgiven, appropriately present this prayer? All who truly call God "Father" must have been welcomed home as His children. He gave them the kiss of forgiveness, and put on them "the best robe." What need to come day by day for pardon received once for all? And why ever again confess themselves "miserable sinners," instead of exulting as God's happy children?

When a sinner unfeignedly repents, he is forgiven; but as long as he is liable to transgress, he may need to ask for pardon. Unless he has attained absolute perfection, he has still to pray, "Forgive us our debts." Our Lord said to Peter, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John xiii. 10, R.V.). By repentance and faith the converted sinner is bathed in "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness." But as in walking from the bath the feet are soiled and need cleansing, so a pardoned sinner, though justified as regards his

former ungodly life, is liable to contract fresh stains which make the prayer for pardon as appropriate each day as that for daily bread.

Some say this prayer is not evangelical, because given to those still under the Law, and prior to the crucifixion. But it was twice recorded long after that event for those who were under the New Covenant. It is true that when a sinner repents he "walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." St. John says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin"; but he also teaches in the same epistle, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us": on which Dean Alford says, "St. John refers not to any previous state of sinful life before conversion, but to their now existing state, and the sins to which they are liable in that state. This state of needing cleansing from all present sin is veritably that of all of us; and our recognition and confession of it is the very first essential of walking in light." Again, St. John connects a state of sanctification with the continued need of pardon when he says, "These things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." They who are truly "born of God" cannot sin as they once did; they cannot sin habitually, encouraging it, persevering in it; they hate it, resist it, mourn over it; yet are they liable to be overcome by occasional temptation; but they are not on this account to despair as though no fresh pardon were possible, since they who believe

have One who ever pleads their cause with God (1 John ii. 1, 2). St. Paul says of himself, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal, unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The two classes of statement are in beautiful harmony. When a sinner repents, his sins are pardoned and the Holy Spirit is given, but he is still exposed to the crafts and assaults of the devil. Sin is now alien to his nature, and when he falls into it he has no peace till he repents of it. But he has often occasion to lament such failures. He still with the publican prays, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The larger knowledge which, by the Spirit, he now enjoys of God, shows the vast interval between himself and Divine perfection. An increasing sense of obligation with growing love to God makes him more sensitive to his failures. The stronger the light, the more obvious the stains; the brighter the sunbeam, the plainer the motes. The summit of the mountain, piercing the skies with its glittering pinnacles and spotless dome, is not seen from the low-lying valley, and he who wishes to climb has a very imperfect notion of the task before him. The precipice concealing the distance must first be surmounted, but when this has been conquered, instead of thinking he has gained the goal, he is filled with admiring awe as

he beholds the mountain rising far, far beyond and above him. The sinner first seeking pardon has no such conception of his need of it while climbing the craggy cliffs of penitence, as when from the tableland of forgiveness he gazes upwards at the mountain-heights of God's holiness.

"Christian perfection" is obedience to God by men on earth similar to that of angels in heaven. This all should hold as the true ideal; but when the term is used as actually characterizing individuals, the real meaning intended is generally that of maturity of character, habitual faith in God, a steady purpose of obedience, and progress heavenward. To profess to have reached the goal, may indicate a low ideal; to be unconscious of defect, betrays dulness of the spiritual sense; to be satisfied with the service rendered, reveals rather the weakness than the strength of love. C. H. Spurgeon remarked to the writer respecting one who held the opinion here questioned, "I always thought him perfect till he told me he was."

Some speak of Sanctification as attainable instantaneously by a simple act of faith. As a sinner believing is at once released from debt, so, they say, if we believe in Christ as the Sanctifier, we are at once freed from the liability to sin again. But the two great blessings of salvation, while inseparable in fact, are essentially distinct in development. In Justification, Divine Grace annuls the sentence of condemnation; in Sanctification, the Divine Spirit produces holiness of thought and conduct. In the

nature of things this must be gradual and continuous. The seed is sown as soon as we believe; there is no interval between the pardon of a sinner and his reception of the germ of the new and heavenly life, but this has to grow and bear fruit. The chains are struck off the captive, and he receives new courage and strength; but the battle is only begun, though final victory is promised. The leaven has been put into the meal, but the whole lump is not immediately leavened. Thus we are admonished to "grow in grace"; to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." This has been the concurrent experience of the holiest of God's children. Few of ancient times were nearer perfection than Daniel, yet he says, "Whiles I was praying and confessing my sin." There is scarcely one of the Bible saints of whom some fault is not recorded. David says, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults"; and Solomon, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not"; and St. James, "In many things we all stumble." St. Paul repudiated any claim to be perfect; for though he triumphed in the assurance of final victory, he was conscious of temporary reverses. It was said of the Romans that they might be worsted in battle but never in war; and the soldiers of Christ, when most hopeful of the result, are most aware of failures, and confess them with penitence lest they should become permanent. St. Augustine speaks of "sins of a daily infirmity, in which even he who watches most will yet

be entangled; scarcely without some of the world's dust adhering to him will even the faithful man walk through the world's paths. But in this prayer there is the shaking off this dust before it has settled and hardened upon him."

To suppose perfection already reached, is not merely a theological error, but a moral defect and disguised peril. It lowers the standard of duty to think we have reached it; it lessens the sense of obligation to consider we have discharged it; it weakens the motive to watchfulness to imagine the foe is slain. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Because the faults of God's children differ from the daring sins of rebels, they do not therefore lose the character of sin, nor cease to incur a debt which must be cancelled or paid. It is possible to receive pardon of some great trespass, and by repeated commission of smaller sins to perish. It is only when God's pardoned children continue to "add on their part all diligence," that they are "not idle nor unfruitful"; whereas "he that lacketh these things is blind, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure." Lack of diligence in repenting weakens such surety. Little expenses multiplied may ruin a business or impoverish a family. Debts neglected because each is small, may so accumulate as to cause bankruptcy. Accretions of rust, each particle invisible, may stop a watch. St. Augustine says, "It is of little drops that mighty

rivers, yea ruinous and wide-wasting inundations, are made up. The leak may be trifling, yet if waters are always coming in, and not being continually pumped out, they will in the end sink the ship. A mountain of minute grains of sand will as effectually crush out the life, as the same weight of solid lead. Little venomous insects, if only there are enough of them, will kill a man with their multitudinous bites, as certainly as some wild beast with its single one. But in this prayer there is for the man that faithfully uses it, the pledge and power of a daily cleansing, the medicine of his slight but ever-recurring hurts" (Trench).

The sins of God's children have a speciality which forbids us to treat them as trifles. When a friendship is peculiarly tender, we feel sensitive to every hasty word which may grieve. The greater our obligation, the greater our regret. Now that we are at home, we know more of our Father's loving heart and the goodness of His laws. To those who have tasted the bliss of filial relationship, acts of negligence have a guilt which could not attach to wilful disobedience committed when strangers to their Father's love. More knowledge of His Will increases the guilt of resisting it; higher privileges entail heavier responsibilities; filial love gives to conscience additional sensitiveness; and the child at home, without ever doubting the Father's favour, is more conscious of defects in his own love and obedience.

This very prayer serves to convince us of our need of this petition. *Our Father:* but how often I fail in

the reverence, trust, love, and obedience due from a child! *Hallowed be Thy Name:* but how have I come short in cherishing befitting reverence of it myself, and promoting it in others! *Thy Kingdom come:* but how little I have done to advance it! *Thy Will be done on earth as in heaven:* but how inferior my obedience to that of angels! *Give us this day our daily bread:* but how often I have doubted or murmured, or been unthankful to the Giver! If then I need to come "day by day" for "daily bread," I need also to come day by day for daily pardon.

A dear friend now in glory, who on earth manifested more of angelic piety than is often the privilege of men to witness, and who was a distinguished member and minister of a church including "Christian perfection" in its doctrinal system, thus records his own sense of daily need of remission of debts contracted as a child of God:—

"Sins unnumbered I confess,
Of exceeding sinfulness,
Sins against Thyself alone,
Only to Omniscience known;

Deafness to Thy whispered calls;
Rashness 'midst remembered falls;
Transient fears beneath the rod;
Treacherous trifling with my God;

Tasting that the Lord is good,
Pining then for poisoned food;
At the fountain of the skies
Craving creaturely supplies;

Worldly cares at worship-time;
Grovelling aims in works sublime;
Pride, when God is passing by;
Sloth, when souls in darkness die.

O be merciful to me
Now in bitterness for Thee ;
Father, pardon through Thy Son,
Sins against the Spirit done."—W. Bunting.

III.—Our Father's Forgiveness.

The "Forgiveness of Sins" is an article of the Creed more easily pronounced than explained. The universe is under the great law of Cause and Effect. Influences once set in motion continue their operation both in the material and moral worlds. Violation of physical law entails physical suffering, of social law social disgrace, of moral law deterioration of character, of governmental law legal penalty. Conduct has appropriate consequences, and "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But in asking pardon, we ask for an intervention between cause and effect, for the neutralizing of influences actually at work. We ask for the stone that has been flung to be stopped, for the flood that has been let loose to be arrested, for the fire that has been lighted not alone to be quenched, but also for the precious things it has consumed to be restored.

Nature does not forgive. Health enfeebled by folly is not renovated by remorse. The spendthrift's riches do not fly back at the call of regret. Repentance does not atone for crime, acquit the criminal, or restore him to his former social position. Socrates doubted whether sin could be forgiven. Job felt the difficulty when he said that if he should justify himself, his own mouth would condemn him ; that if he made his hands

never so clean, he would still be as one plunged in a ditch; that there needed some intermediary to effect reconciliation; but that, alas! there was no such daysman to lay his hand on both. "The one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," does "lay His hand on both," and by His atonement declares and explains forgiveness.

"If it were not for Christ's clear revelation, I could not believe in a free forgiveness. Cause and effect, antecedent and consequence, are so bound together on God's earth, that the idea of their severance—which is, in other words, the release of the soul that has sinned from the death which sin merits—can only be accepted as the explicit assertion, the direct revelation, of Him who knows all things" (Vaughan).

Jehovah had revealed Himself to Moses as "merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"; although "He will not always clear the guilty." The holy God who will uphold His law and punish wilful transgressors, is the pardoning God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities"; "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity? because He delighteth in mercy." The typical sacrifices connected with the confession of sin were about to be superseded when the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus said of Himself that He came "to give His life a ransom for many." Him the apostles proclaimed as "a Prince and a Saviour, for

to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." When Saul the persecutor was himself forgiven, he proclaimed that "through this Man is preached the forgiveness of sins." Though "all have sinned," they who repent are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood, to show His righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses." Christ is the Medium of forgiveness, to whom all whose debts are cancelled owe their deliverance, however defective their knowledge of Him. "In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." However mysterious the doctrine of the Atonement, we are plainly taught the fact "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." "He was wounded for our transgressions, and with His stripes we are healed; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The truth that "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin," is the theme of the new song of heaven. "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood, be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever."

Dr. Dale, commenting on Eph. i. 7, says: "That the ground of our forgiveness is in Christ, not in ourselves, and that His death has a unique relation to the remission of sins, are facts which lie at the

foundation of the faith, and hope, and life of the Christian Church. . . . The death of Christ was an act in which there was a revelation of the righteousness of God, which must otherwise have been revealed in the infliction of the penalty of sin on the human race. . . . Theories of the Atonement have exercised and baffled the speculation of a long series of theologians, but the Atonement itself has continued to give consolation and courage to all penitent hearts, transforming their despair into hope, their misery into peace, and their terror into perfect joy in the righteousness and love of God."

Scripture nowhere teaches the absolute payment by Christ of our debts, but that His sacrifice is a sufficient provision for the pardon of all who, by repentance and faith, are willing to receive it. If only one transgressor is pardoned, the law seems to need to be honoured and righteousness vindicated; nay, we feel this to be needed for the mere *offering* of pardon. The difficulty is that of reconciling the holiness of God and His rule of the universe with His proclamation of pardon. When this is removed, we cease to feel a difficulty in reconciling the holiness of God with the pardon of any multitude of penitent sinners. If the amnesty may righteously be proclaimed, it may righteously be ratified. For one sinner to cross the great gulf dividing us from heaven, a bridge seemed to be needed which Deity alone could construct, but which, needed for one, was sufficient to bear all mankind. All may receive forgiveness, but

they who reject the mercy will bear their own burden, although provision was made for its remission in the case of all who "repent and believe."

The gospel explains the mystery. The evil wrought by sin is counteracted by Him who died for sin. The cross of Christ interposes between the sinner who believes and the punishment due to violated law. If forgiveness through the Atonement is mysterious, forgiveness without an atonement is inexplicable. Sin as a cause does not result in punishment as its effect, because the Atonement accomplishes that for which punishment would have been required in relation to the Divine government; and, in relation to our own nature, the injury of sin is counteracted by a new spiritual life produced in Regeneration, whereby the power of the former habit of sin is counteracted and eventually destroyed. Left to ourselves and the natural effects of sin, the bad seed must grow, producing its present and future harvest of "corruption." But by the heavenly life imparted this seed is destroyed; "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." The converted sinner has passed "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." We are "new creatures in Christ Jesus." Sanctification, the result of Regeneration, is evidence of forgiveness. Sin is remitted by deliverance not only from future punishment by God, but from present pollution in ourselves. Thus God delivers us from sin; both its penalty and its power.

The doctrine of Forgiveness needs, however, to be explained consistently with certain revealed truths and natural facts. God is said to "visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Those children may themselves be penitent and pardoned and yet suffer from the sins of their parents, as by inherited disease, poverty, disgrace; and in the case of nations, one generation may have to bear the debts incurred and the animosities fomented by wars they blush to think of. So an individual may suffer disease, poverty, dishonour, long after he has repented of the sins that caused them. God not only does not interpose to arrest these results, but may even specially appoint suffering as a sequence of sin the pardon of which has been assured. So it was with David. Though he repented and was forgiven, the temporal evils did come upon him, in the bitter shame that overshadowed his own home through Absalom. He was assured of pardon, yet was adjudged to suffer. "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

The sorrows resulting from sins forgiven are to be regarded not as penal, but as disciplinary—to illustrate the evil of sin, to show that even the children of God must suffer if they do wrong, to deter others from similar faults, to cultivate humility, watchfulness, and prayer. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." The injury

to character, though at once subjected to remedial influence, is not at once effaced. The habits of long years of sin need to be supplanted by habits of holiness. From the pages of memory the records and images of evil do not at once fade away, nor can those pages become at once crowded with recollections of evil conquered and good achieved. The Jews, although forgiveness was promised, were warned of the sorrows resulting from the memory of sin. "Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." It is questionable whether anything that has once left its impress even on our finite minds is absolutely forgotten. St. Paul, when rejoicing that God had "forgiven all trespasses," did not cease to remember with self-abasement that he had persecuted the Church of God. And saints in glory give thanks to Him who "washed them from their sins," thus showing that the memory of sin remains. But as God acts towards us as if He did not remember our sins, treating us as if we had never sinned, so He can cause our joy to abound in spite of our own memory of transgression,—a memory which, while encouraging humility, will also prompt to more intense gratitude and deeper tones of praise.

With these explanations we may rejoice to know that the remission of our debts by God is *absolute remission;* no arrears remain, no penal demands to be

paid either in this world or the next. It is *immediate*, for no sooner is the prayer truly offered than the answer is recorded, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The guilt is at once removed, the sentence cancelled, and the work of progressive sanctification commenced, never to end but in the absolute removal from the soul of every taint of sin. The liberated debtor is treated as if he had never been in debt: unlike the case of earthly debtors, who may be cleared by legal process but do not recover their former credit. The sinner whom God forgives is trusted, adopted, loved and treated as a child. The prodigal son is not kept in the outer court with the servants, but welcomed to the inner chamber and folded to the Father's heart. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." God will cast all our sins "into the depths of the sea"; "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us;" "He delighteth in mercy." We may safely appeal to Him as One "whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive." In nothing so much as in forgiveness are His own words illustrated: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

There is pardon for the chief of sinners. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." A sin for which there is no possible forgiveness is one for which there is no actual repentance. No one is shut out by God from remission who does not shut himself

out by persevering in sin. Pardon is inseparable from penitence. Christ "is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins." These gifts are indissoluble. The first is a pledge of the second. Repentance is our actually moving out from the shadow of death across the boundary into the sunshine of life and love. He who repents is already in the region of pardon and the light of God.

Christ the High Priest, through whose sacrifice and intercession this pardon is conferred, is the only Mediator at whose hands we receive it, by whose word we are assured of it. It is the privilege and duty of all who are forgiven to declare and pronounce to all others, being penitent, the same absolution and remission of sin which they have received; but it is Christ alone who can bestow it, and authoritatively declare and confirm it. He said to the man whom He cured of the palsy, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," and claimed that "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin"; and as "none can forgive sins but God only," none but Christ may assume this function. In the words of the Dean of Llandaff: "I cannot believe that Christ meant any man to come, even as a helper, even as an abettor, between the soul and its God. It is the glory, it is the originality, it is the power of the Gospel, that it brings together, face to face, without any intermediate, the two Beings which are at issue, God and the soul. You say you can aid this meeting? Take heed that you do not hinder it" (Vaughan). Luther said, "A pope or

bishop has no more power to remit sin than the humblest priest, and even without any priest the humblest Christian, even though a woman or child, can do the same. For if a simple believer say to thee, 'God pardon thy sin in the name of Jesus Christ,' and thou receive that word with firm faith, and as though God Himself spake it to thee, thou art absolved." The absolution Christ bestows is plenary, immediate, complete. If we, being finite, have a multitude of transgressions to confess, He, being Infinite, has a greater "multitude of tender mercies" wherewith to hide them. "Our sin in respect to His mercy is as a spark to the ocean; and cannot the ocean quench a spark?" Can the food be insufficient for the guests whom He invites? Can the lifeboat He equips be too small for the shipwrecked crew?

IV.—Prayer for Pardon.

God, by His Ambassador, bids us say, "Forgive us our debts," and encourages us by the promise, "Every one that asketh receiveth." He who "was in the bosom of the Father," and knows His purpose, the Christ who Himself suffered for our sins, teaches us thus to pray. The High Priest who intercedes above instructs us how to plead below, so that our prayers and His may blend, and "Him the Father heareth always." Thus instructed by the Son of God, we pray to a Father who pitieth His children and calls them to Himself. Round about the throne of Majesty

is the rainbow of Mercy dispelling our fear. Acceptable prayer for pardon includes

1. *Conviction of guilt.*—We must recognise our indebtedness. We must not make weakness an excuse for wickedness. If helpless as a worm, if lifeless as a corpse, we cannot be guilty as men. God has endowed us with capacities which make it possible for us to obey Him, but we have abused those capacities, and so have incurred a debt which was both due and in our power to pay. Nor may we plead temperament, circumstances, or the devil. We never yield but by our own consent, and this is our sin. Let us beware of the false humility that pleads helplessness, and cultivate the true humility that confesses our abuse of ability and a depraved proneness to evil.

2. *Contrition.*—Many criminals are sorry when captured, who, were they to escape, would forget their grief; and many sinners against God are sorry, not because they have sinned, but because their sins are about to be judged. Godly sorrow mourns for the sin itself, as rebellion against our Creator, as ingratitude towards our Benefactor, as undutifulness towards our Father. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Thus the publican in the parable smites his breast for sorrow while he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The Psalms are full of the groanings of contrite hearts. All Christian biography records the anguish caused by sin. Without such sorrow, not rue joy. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The hope of pardon

does not altogether remove this sorrow. God forgives us, but we do not forgive ourselves. The wound is healed, but the scar remains. A little boy was told by his father to drive a nail into a plank for every offence committed. Whenever he did something worthy of praise, a nail was withdrawn. At length the father said with joy, "See, they are all gone now." "Yes, father," said the son, "but the marks are there." Sorrow caused to parents by youthful heedlessness is deep regret in old age. St. Paul never ceased to reflect with sorrow that he was once a "persecutor, and injurious." The writer cannot forget an illustration of such sorrow in the case of a very poor field-labourer who was groaning in extreme agony. When there seemed a little abatement of suffering, some words of sympathy were uttered, to which the dying man replied, "My biggest pain is to think that I ever grieved my dear Lord Jesus." Such sorrow is a mark of sonship and a sign of pardon. "The seal is set on wax when it melts; so God sets pardon on melting hearts." Such sorrow is a means of reformation. The seeds of truth watered by penitential tears will bear fruit in the heavenly paradise. "He that lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend. Eternity mourns *that*" (H. Taylor).

3. *Confession.*—"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." We should confess an injury to our neighbour as a step towards redressing it. "Confess your faults one to another." So our faults against God are to be confessed to God. If we wish

God to hide them, we must not hide them ourselves. If we would be healed, we must show our wound to the Physician. If we would get our debt remitted, we must acknowledge our obligation. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord: and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." As God alone forgives, so to God we are to confess. No fellow-sinner may stand between ourselves and Him, but only the One High Priest who has power to absolve. To substitute auricular confession to a man for spiritual confession to God, and to be satisfied with a fellow-sinner's assurance of absolution, is calculated to encourage us in a continual vibration between false comfort and fresh sin, like the see-saw of children's play. The comfort which some say they find in frequent confession to a priest, may be really found by daily confession to God. When there are no wilful sins burdening the conscience, relief by daily confession is still needed from the oppressive sense of frequent imperfections, such as tainted motives, wandering thoughts, ingratitude, distrust, indolence, neglect of opportunities, selfish abuse of stewardship, and the long, long interval between our attainments and the perfect Example. If these are habitually passed over as not needing to be confessed, we cannot rejoice as we might in the full assurance of pardon, and our own character must suffer from the tacit allowance of such

imperfection. The most loving children are the most sensitive, and are not happy till any disrespectful word, any act of negligence, is confessed, and the parent's kiss of forgiveness received. And thus the children of God will daily cultivate their filial graces, relieve the burden on their loving hearts, and seek the reassurance of their Father's pardoning mercy by repeated confession, not "dissembling and cloaking their sins before the face of Almighty God our Heavenly Father, but confessing them with a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart." But we are not required to ransack memory for every item, as though remission depended on exact enumeration. Many faults escape consciousness when committed, and others soon fade from remembrance. Our Father accepts us when we come to Him with a humble sense of indebtedness, without imposing on us the burden of detailing all the particulars. "One earnest gaze upon Christ is worth a thousand scrutinies of self—the man who beholds the cross, and beholding it weeps, cannot be really blind nor perilously self-ignorant" (Vaughan). No one need fear that a sin neglected in the catalogue of confession is omitted in the royal charter of pardon, if in self-abasement yet filial trust he says, "Our Father, forgive!"

4. *Purpose of reformation.*—Sorrow for sin involves hatred of it and a resolution to forsake it. It would be contrary to God's holiness to pardon the sins of those who intend to go on sinning. He is Holy, and the object of His mercy no less than of His law is to

promote holiness in us. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." The promise, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," immediately follows the precept, "Wash you, make you clean; cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come *now* and let us reason together, saith the Lord." The promise is linked with the precept, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and let him return unto the Lord, for He will abundantly pardon." The purpose of Christ in redemption was not primarily to remit penalty, but to purify the heart, the former being a means towards the latter. "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world." Pardon is obtained only by the mediation of Him whose very Name declares Him to be a Saviour, not from punishment merely, but from sin. "His Name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Belief in Him includes accepting this salvation, and therefore renouncing the sins confessed. Every prayer for pardon is a pledge of reformation, and every debt remitted is an additional motive to obedience. The cost of our redemption being "not corruptible things as silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ," supplies the strongest motive to forsake the sins the forgiveness of which we ask through such a sacrifice. If every sin should be confessed, and as far as possible redressed, why do it?

This petition, like the rest, looks beyond the individual. First of all, we pray: "Have mercy upon *me*, a sinner." But having learnt the brotherhood of humanity, we include our neighbours. We pray for the household, the congregation, the world, when we say, "Forgive *us our* debts." But there must be no lessening our personal contrition because others share in the necessity. A deep sense of our own sin helps us to feel and pray for others.

Some resolve to seek pardon at the eleventh hour, like the dying thief. They do not consider that the present hour may be to them the very last, that the end may approach unobserved, and that it may find them less disposed than ever to seek forgiveness, owing to the strengthened habit of impenitent delay. They seem to think that repentance can be summoned to their bedside like the doctor, and that having been long resolutely ordered to keep far away, it will come at a word. The repentance which precedes pardon is not a sudden regret for the past or fear of the future, but a change of heart. The dying thief was not saved without such change. Reverence towards the Most High was indicated in his appeal to his companion, "Dost thou not fear God?" confession of sin in the words, "We indeed justly"; admiration of goodness in the testimony, "This man hath done nothing amiss"; faith in the royalty of Him whom men derided, in the address to Christ, "Lord, when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom"; humble prayer in the request, "Lord, remember me";—these, with avowal of his own

allegiance and care for the soul of his companion, indicated a complete transformation of character. If it took place suddenly, can such repentance be reckoned on in the case of those who, unlike him, have long known of Christ and neglected to seek mercy? Such repentance needs the assistance of the Divine Spirit, but it is still our work. "God commandeth all men to repent." It is a work so important and difficult, that not a day should be lost in commencing it. If not one single true Christian can be found willing deliberately to spare one day from his religious life, so that for one day he should cease to pray and to resist sin, is it not the utmost folly for those who have not yet even begun the work, to delay it for months and years? "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Behold, now is the day of salvation."

Our debt is in God's book; let us daily bring it to remembrance, that it may be confessed and cancelled ere the account be closed. Some neglect to seek pardon because they under-estimate their debt; others despair because it is so great. They try to rid themselves of the burden of fear as though they could thus be rid of the burden of guilt. There can be no true peace but in pardon. "Suppose a man hath a thorn in his foot, which puts him to pain; let him anoint it, or wrap it up, yet, till the thorn be plucked out, the foot aches and swells, and he hath no ease" (Watson). Many a wounded soldier would recover if the bullet were extracted, but while it remains in the wound there can be no cure.

Many on what has seemed their dying bed have expressed a repentance which, on their recovery, has been proved unreal. How perilous to postpone such a work till there will be the briefest time for it and the least capacity! as if a man should defer a task needing great exertion till he was weak and weary; or one needing the clearest vision, till the sun had set and the shadows of night had fallen; as if the torrent could be stemmed more easily when the boat had been drawn more into mid-channel; as if the precipice could be better avoided after slipping partly over the slope; as if a fire could be more effectually quenched when the flames had gained greater mastery; as if a disease could be better cured when its force had more fully developed, and the patient had less strength to rally! Every day's delay increases the debt, lessens the opportunity of pardon, and weakens the inclination to seek it. Luther said there were three things he dared not think of without Christ,—Sin, Death, Judgment. But if sin be pardoned, the sting of death is extracted, and the judgment has no terrors. How "blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity"! "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

V.—Forgiveness of one another.

The appended clause, "As we forgive our debtors," indicates a necessary qualification for presenting the request, for they alone who forgive are in a state of

mind truly to ask to be forgiven. Some desire the benefit without performing the duty, or think that the wish to forgive entitles them to actual and immediate forgiveness from God. Some, out of mistaken regard for evangelical truth, interpret the qualification with less literalness than the petition. They ask, How can works be a plea when we are suppliants for mercy? and how can we venture to ask Him to pardon us in the manner and degree in which we pardon our brethren? Thus the mental interpretation given to the clause is frequently this: "Forgive us our debts, and help us to forgive our debtors." But the petition is conditional not on a purpose, but on a fact; not on the admission of a duty, but on the present performance of it. It is a precedent necessity, not a resulting effect. Luke expresses an habitual state of mind: "For we ourselves also forgive everyone that is indebted to us;" Matthew, the already-accomplished duty: "As we also have forgiven our debtors."

1. *Human forgiveness.*—A difficult duty. Our predominant thoughts have reference to our own safety, property, honour. We think more of our rights than of our obligations, of what others owe us rather than of what we owe them. We are impatient of excuses, stand up for our rights, resent injuries, and insist on the uttermost farthing. This is seen in the attitude of nations, which are but combinations of individuals. Why are armies and navies maintained at such prodigious cost, if not sternly to demand national

rights? Some slight to an ambassador or insult to a flag is supposed to justify wholesale slaughter! Most wars would have been prevented had there been a mutual disposition to forgive a debt, instead of a blind determination to exact it. If this is regarded as legitimate in public affairs, it is not surprising that it should influence private life. But it is opposed to the plain teaching of Christ and His apostles: "Love your enemies. Avenge not yourselves. If thine enemy hunger, feed him. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; is not easily provoked." In this prayer our Lord specially emphasized this appended condition: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

The term debt is figurative as regards our relations with God, and means guilt and liability to penalty. In relation to ourselves, therefore, the term does not necessarily mean pecuniary obligations. If all such debts are to be remitted, none would be incurred; few would lend if lending were equivalent to giving; credit would be unknown in business, and commerce would be almost impossible. Pecuniary obligations ought to be held sacred by the debtor; but though the creditor may rightly claim payment, he ought, in the spirit of this prayer, not to exercise undue pressure, not to take advantage of the debtor's difficulties, but, if misfortune overtake him and he be unable to pay, to exercise patience and abate the claim rather than risk the ruin

of the debtor. Nor does the condition involve the loosening of moral obligations. There are social and relative duties always owing from one to another. We are not called on to submit to injustice. The interests of society require that law should be upheld. "The magistrate beareth not the sword in vain." True humanity requires that law-breakers be punished. A Christian, asking forgiveness from God, may therefore consistently prosecute the ruffian and the thief, whose immunity would encourage outrage. But in thus vindicating law we should not indulge personal revenge.

Moreover, forgiveness by man must necessarily be very different to forgiveness by God, as inferior to His as we are to Himself; and debts incurred to His supreme majesty must be immeasurably greater than any of the petty obligations we incur towards each other. When therefore we ask God to forgive us "as we forgive our debtors," we do not mean that our forgiveness can measure His, either in nature or amount. But notwithstanding such considerations, the duty of forgiving as God forgives must not be explained away. Certain resemblances are essential.

Our forgiveness must be *sincere*. Much that passes current as forgiveness is so in appearance alone. Sometimes payment is not exacted because there is no power to exact—"we do not bite because we have no teeth"; sometimes because we deem it inexpedient, fearing discredit or retaliation; sometimes because we only postpone exaction for a better opportunity; and

sometimes non-exaction is counterbalanced by cherished ill-will, alienation, detraction, and the lingering resentment, "Though I forgive, I can never forget." This is not forgiving as God forgives. "He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good;" and they who are truly His children must cherish kind feelings even towards their foes. Our perfect Exemplar, "when He was reviled, reviled not again," but prayed for His murderers.

But is not repentance a condition of pardon with men as with God? "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and *if he repent*, forgive him." If God does not receive us until we repent, we are not required to assure of forgiveness any wrongdoer until he has expressed sorrow. But prior to our repentance God cherishes pity, shows kindness, waits to be gracious, is ready to pardon, makes advances, calls us to Himself, beseeches us to be reconciled. "Return unto me, and I will abundantly pardon." Therefore we, on our part, before an offender asks forgiveness, are bound to cherish kind feelings towards him, to pray for him, and to be ready to express forgiveness when he repents. Many who are not Christians might profess to forgive an enemy crouching for pardon, for their pride might be satisfied with his humiliation; but a child of God is to be ready to forgive before forgiveness is sought. Although "the wrath of God abideth" on all sinners who persist in sin, His mercy is waiting to pardon—an ocean ready to flow out towards the sinner and cover all his transgressions, as

soon as the sinner's repentance opens the flood-gate. If thus we are to cherish forgiveness even towards those who do not repent, how surely should we pardon generously, gladly, all who do repent. When an offender has been forgiven and repeats the offence, we are apt to feel discharged from further leniency. But this our Lord forbids. When Peter said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven."

2. *Human forgiveness a condition of Divine.*—Our forgiveness of each other is linked with forgiveness from God. The parable of the unmerciful servant is recorded immediately after the precept to forgive "until seventy times seven," with the solemn warning—"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Does then our mercifulness to man deserve mercy from God? Some have encouraged this notion by a false interpretation of the text, "Charity covereth a multitude of sins": as though a forgiving disposition towards others atones for a man's own sins against God. The meaning is clear from Prov. x. 12: "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all transgression." How can the pardon fellow-sinners give each other be a title to pardon from the God they have all offended? As well might a company of rebels plead

that as they had forgiven each other their petty wrongs in prison, they might all claim exemption from the penalties of high treason! This is a statement not of claim, but of fact—a fact the principle of which is involved in every true asking of pardon from God. There cannot be any genuine prayer for pardon unless we are ourselves cultivating a forgiving spirit; for the following reasons:—

1. *Pardon is linked with repentance, and this abjures an unforgiving spirit.*—I must "cease to do evil" if I would plead the promise of the scarlet becoming white as snow. The unrighteous man must "forsake his thoughts," if he would hope that God will "abundantly pardon." My faults against God include faults against men. I say to God, "I am very sorry for words, actions, thoughts, injurious to my fellow-men; sorry for a proud, exacting, unforgiving spirit. Forgive me this debt!" How can I be encouraging that for which I am sorry? My asking pardon means that I renounce the sins confessed. The fact "we forgive" is implied in the prayer, "Forgive us." We believe that God has great forgiveness for our great guilt; and to this we appeal. Can we at the same time be cherishing unforgiveness? To say, "Forgive me, although I do not forgive others," is a prayer which cannot reach the throne. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." The forgiveness is to be exercised then and there; not postponed. It must precede the

prayer. Whatever our sense of the wrong done us by men, we cannot as sinners reasonably expect remission of our debt against Divine justice, unless cultivating in ourselves a merciful spirit to others.

> "Though justice be thy plea, consider this:
> That in the course of justice none of us
> Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
> And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
> The deeds of mercy."

2. *Gratefulness* urges us to please our Benefactor, and God who forgives us bids us glorify Him by forgiving others. I am happy in release from debt, and adore God's mercy. Must not this produce mercifulness? My debt to God is infinitely greater than any debt of my fellow-servant to myself. If God loves me in spite of my many sins, may I not see something to love in the fellow-servant who wrongs me? "Believers are not forgiven because they forgive; nay, they forgive because they are forgiven; and thus it is, that feeling themselves forgiven by God, they are lovingly constrained to forgive" (J. de Valdez, tr. Betts).

3. *The prayer includes those who wrong us.*—It is not "Forgive me," but "Forgive us." We appear before God in company with those who are our debtors. We pray for our enemies: "O God, forgive *us;* with me, forgive also this man who has injured my property, reputation, honour; this man who has cheated, maligned, and hates me; for in so acting towards me he has sinned against Thee, and his debt to Thee exceeds that which he owes to me; our Father,

forgive him!" How obvious it is that in truly offering this prayer, "Our Father, forgive *us*," we have ourselves already forgiven!

4. *It is the prayer of a child of God.*—They who truly say, "Our Father," love and resemble Him, and are "merciful even as their Father who is in heaven is merciful." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" God's children do already "love one another," and "are in charity with their neighbours," with all who under the same Fatherhood are brethren. Without a forgiving spirit, we can have no true assurance of belonging to this Brotherhood. Its absence invalidates our repentance and contradicts our prayer. Sin cannot have been forgiven while unrenounced. What is our prevailing spirit towards men? Are we chiefly bent on maintaining "our rights," and compelling others to pay their dues? If so, is it not likely that we may in our hearts ascribe to God the same disposition? "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." If in ourselves a spirit of exaction rather than of forgiveness is cherished, is it not reasonable that we should lose confidence in the *Divine* forbearance? A master harsh in his requirements, a parent severe towards his children, a citizen claiming all his rights regardless of others, a man of business stern in enforcing all his dues, will naturally regard God rather as a stern ruler than a forgiving Father,

transferring to Him their own spirit of exaction rather than attributing to Him delight in showing mercy. "If we believe that individual Right is the great principle we are to assert in all common transactions, we shall regard God as one like ourselves: we shall feel that His main desire is to assert His rights over us. If self-will do govern the world, if we confess it to be our lord, it holds us in its iron bonds; we are in prison, the evil spirit is our jailor, and we cannot come out till we have paid the uttermost farthing" (Maurice). On the contrary, may I not hope that God who has helped me to exercise compassion has had compassion on me? If in my heart a pardoning rather than an exacting spirit prevails, is it not likely that my own appeal will find response when I pray, "Father! forgive"?

In this model-prayer no one may ask the boon without being reminded of the duty. Forgiveness is the law of Redemption, binding God to men, and men to men. "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye." The obligation is involved in every clause of the prayer. "Our Father;" therefore we are brethren and should forgive each other. "Hallowed be Thy Name;" we hallow it by cultivating the compassion it reveals. "Thy Kingdom come;" it is based on reconciliation, and comes in proportion as men live together in forbearing love. "Thy will be done;" this is His will, that we forgive those who are indebted to us. "Give *us* bread;" should we not forgive those

who with ourselves are dependent on the same fatherly care? "Forgive us;" should not we who require so much forgiveness forgive others?

This petition passes a solemn condemnation on those who refuse to forgive. It almost amounts to asking God not to forgive them! Chrysostom says, "God appoints thee thyself the master of the verdict. The judgment thou passest upon thyself He will pass upon thee." And Luther says, "This prayer will, in the sight of God, be a sin; for when thou sayest, 'I will not forgive,' and standest before God with thy precious *pater noster*, and mumblest with thy mouth, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*, what is that but saying, O God, I am a debtor to Thee, and there is one who is the same to myself. Now, I will not forgive him, and so do not Thou forgive me. I will not obey Thy command, although Thou hast told me to forgive; I will rather renounce Thee and Thy heaven, and all, and go to the devil for evermore."

Let us then cultivate this grace of mercy. One means of conquering an unforgiving spirit is ceasing to look back on the injuries which provoked it. Memory is good, but sometimes forgetfulness is better. Let us treasure the records of kindnesses to stimulate gratitude, but erase those of injuries lest they continue to rouse ill-will. When Antony showed the dagger-rents in Cæsar's robe, the people were roused to fury as if they beheld the murderers in the very act. So imagination may brood over wrongs till they become a constant presence, rousing ever fresh indignation. Let

us rather supplant such pictures by their opposites. Let us think of any good qualities in our enemies, any wrongs done by ourselves. Let us not only extinguish the spark, but bury the powder. Let us bear in mind that these injuries from men were permitted by God, and that in submission to *Him* we should cease to be angry with *them*; and also that we possess in Himself infinitely more than will compensate for any injury from man. If every wrong which pains us becomes an occasion of renewed intercourse with God, we should feel that with such a refuge we ought not to be vexed with the storm which drives us into it; that with such an exhaustless treasury to supply the loss, we ought not to be reluctant to forgive the thief; and that God's love and Christ's example should have more effect in producing gentleness than any injuries from man in provoking wrath.

Forgiveness produces real happiness, while an unforgiving spirit is ever a source of disquiet. We attain a higher dignity when we remit than when we resent. "Greater is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. It is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression." Does our foe raise a tempest of passion? A forgiving spirit says to the troubled waters, "Peace, be still." Does he rob us of wealth or reputation? To forgive him makes our treasury richer by this seeming loss. We shoot in retreat. We conquer when we yield. Our escutcheon becomes brighter by the friction of insult flung at it. "When I am weak, then am I strong." Anger may cast

prostrate a foe, but forgiveness may raise him as a friend. Wrath can do no more than slay him, but love transforms and makes him an ally. I may conquer him by force, but to forgive is to conquer my own spirit by love, and so makes me "more than a conqueror." "To render evil for good is devil-like; to render evil for evil is beast-like; to render good for good is man-like; to render good for evil is God-like."

> "The quality of mercy is not strained;
> It droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven
> Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed,
> It blesses him that gives and him that takes."

Our Father, forgive us. We all have sinned against both Thee and one another. By Thy grace we have been enabled to forgive others. This is the result of mercy in Thee. Grant us more grace to forgive the small debts due to us from our brother, and grant us day by day forgiveness of the great debts due from us to Thee.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SIXTH PETITION.

"AND LEAD [BRING] US NOT INTO TEMPTATION."

SALVATION is deliverance from sin; and therefore includes both pardon of its guilt and release from its power. A gospel would be unworthy of God which, encouraging the transgressor to ask forgiveness, promised no succour against sin itself. We come from the mercy-seat happy in the hope of absolution, but at once encounter temptations by yielding to the like of which we needed that mercy. Must we again fall and cry for repeated pardons? Is prayer merely a hospital for the wounded? Nay, it is also an arsenal for the fight. He who, grieving for sin, implores forgiveness, desires strength to resist temptation, and is here encouraged to ask it. The confession of sin is an acknowledgment of frailty, and therefore of our need of help. The more truly we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," the more earnestly we shall pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

The liberated slave strives to avoid recapture. "A burnt child dreads the fire." He who has been bitten by a serpent will shun the bank where he felt

the poisoned fang. One winter morning when the ground was covered with snow, a robin, urged by hunger, entered an open window of the writer's house, to eat the crumbs spread for it. This visit he frequently repeated, unmolested. But one day the servant closed the window, and the bird found its way of escape cut off. The window was soon reopened; but the robin never returned. For a brief moment it had been captured, and it would not again venture within the possible prison. "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird."

The prodigal welcomed home, desires not again to grieve his father. The more full that forgiveness, the more earnest that desire. The greater the pardon, the greater the guilt if we repeat the offence. Pardon is a deterrent from sin. The fuller our assurance of it, the stronger our endeavour not to lose it. We shall fear to defile the white raiment given us; to obscure the writing; to leave the sunshine. The grace received in forgiveness will do more than the threat of punishment. "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." He who is blessed in the non-imputation of iniquity is the man "in whose spirit there is no guile." The prayer, "Hide Thy face from my sins," is immediately followed by "Create in me a clean heart, O God." The Divine promise, "I will forgive their iniquity," is linked with this other, "I will write my law in their hearts." Our Lord's absolution, "Neither do I condemn thee," was followed by the command, "Go and sin no more."

The gospel assurance, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," is applicable to those alone "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The penitent sinner hoping pardon because "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," is reminded that this is not to encourage but destroy sinfulness: "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." They who pray to be forgiven, pray also to be saved from sin.

I.—What is meant by Temptation.

The fundamental idea is *test*, or *trial for discovery*. The strength of a ship is tested by the fierceness of the storm; and the virtue of a youth by the seductions and trials of the world into which he enters. Temptation implies choice between good and evil, and therefore is unavoidable by all beings capable of moral goodness; which is not the result of physical necessity, but free preference of the good. If so, unfallen angels are perfect, not because they are outside the sphere of possible temptation, but because they always choose what is right. Temptation in this sense is essential to the full maturity of moral excellence. Acts of right choice repeated, form habits of goodness which may constitute a moral necessity, so that temptation, though still presented to the mind, loses all power of harm. We can only become strongly good by freely choosing good. As the limbs

need to be developed by exertion and the mind by education, so also the moral nature by encountering and overcoming temptation. There must be a gymnasium for the soul if we are to become spiritual athletes. The most valuable soldiers are not those who have merely marched on parade or fought imaginary foes at a review, but those who have been in real battles. Adam, before he sinned, was capable of being tempted to sin. A persevering course of victory would have raised him to a far higher condition than that of his first creation. The second Adam, partaking of human nature in all but its moral degeneracy, was tempted in the wilderness as was Adam in the garden; but He overcame, and so not only opened the way for us to the heavenly Paradise, but, for His work as Mediator, was, like ourselves, perfected through temptation (Heb. ii. 10, 17). A test may be applied with various motives; to benefit or beguile; to save or destroy. This reconciles texts seemingly at variance.

1. *Inducement to sin.*—The very nature of God forbids the thought that He ever tempts thus. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed." The essential nature of God, the purity of all His laws: His promises to those alone who are righteous, His threatenings to all the wicked: above all, His gift of Christ to redeem us from all iniquity at infinite cost,—render it absolutely certain that we are never

tempted in the sense of allurement to sin by Him who said, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." We are tempted when "drawn away by our own lusts." Instincts as given by God, useful and holy, become "sinful lusts" when the pleasure beneficently connected with the lawful use of them allures to abuse of them, and they become the devil's agents by tempting to sin.

2. *Temptations as tests of faith* are either sent or permitted by God. Their object is to benefit, not injure: to cultivate our submission, not to induce us to rebel. Thus "God did tempt (prove) Abraham." The command to offer Isaac was a severe test of resignation to the Divine will, absolute self-surrender and faith, that in spite of a seeming impossibility God's promise would yet be fulfilled. Testing may be of use in making known a fact, but do no good to the thing tested. A rope is not strengthened by the weight that tries its tenacity, nor a boiler by the pressure of steam that proves its resisting power. But the skill of a sailor who steers his ship safely in a gale through a difficult channel, or the capacity of a general who fights a battle against great odds, is not only tested but improved. So Abraham's faith was not only shown to be strong, but was made stronger by exercise. So with the Israelites. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart." Leighton says, "Trials stir the water that was possibly clear at the

top, to see whether it be not muddy at the bottom." Many a domestic cistern has held concealed in its depths deposits, from which poisonous exhalations have carried fever through the household. How beneficent the stirring up, by however rough an implement, if it reveals the unsuspected foe! The temptations which were permitted to assail Job revealed, beneath very much that was godly, much of a self-righteous spirit which he was led to renounce and "repent in dust and ashes." He verified his own prediction, "When God hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." So the gale may test the tree, which thereby gains more than it loses; dead branches are broken off, enfeebling parasites torn away, while "Firmer he roots him the ruder it blow." It is possible that by our own fault the trial may become an occasion of sin: yet this is not its purpose: and the experience of the children of God concurs to testify that "Happy is the man whom God correcteth." Samson's riddle has frequent illustration: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." David said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word." "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest." St. Paul could "rejoice in tribulations; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, approval: and approval, hope." He tells us that lest he should "be exalted above measure," there was given to him a "thorn in the flesh," the result of which was that he was able to "glory in his infirmities" by reason of "the power of Christ" resting

upon him. The Apostle James says, "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold temptations (trials); knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience." This is the Divine purpose. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been approved he shall receive the crown of life." Thus St. Peter comforts those who are "put to grief in manifold temptations" by the Divine purpose, "that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

II.—What is meant by asking God not to lead us into Temptation.

The R.V. renders the prayer: "*Bring us not.*" It has been suggested that "to *bring*" implies more danger than the word "to *lead*." God always does *lead* us in His Providence along paths which are perilous by reason of temptation. This is the unavoidable result of man's moral nature and the circumstances of the present life. Temptation, as a necessary discipline, constitutes the difference between the man and the child. An infant is lovely in its innocence, and may well be dedicated to God in faith and prayer, and welcomed as one of the lambs of the flock; but it has not been tried, and cannot be compared with the mature Christian, whose faith has been tested in many a furnace, whose valour has borne him victorious in

many a fight. The latter has not the child's innocence, but neither has the child his experience, matured knowledge, disciplined piety and fitness for high service. Such men as Joseph, after the temptation of Potiphar's house and the trials of prison; Daniel from his open window and the lion's den; and even David; were far nobler characters than any babe, however stainless, uneducated and untried. "Every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil." But none can attain this maturity without that "exercise" which involves temptation.

The faculties of body and mind make temptation possible, and the unavoidable conditions of life make it actual. Over all these circumstances God presides. He, not the devil, is the supreme Arbiter of our life. He is our Guide in a journey from which temptation cannot be excluded. God knows this, yet leads us on. He feeds us amid famine, opens fountains in the desert, and guards us from foes; but famine and desert and foes await us in the path. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." He does not tempt to sin, but He guides us where temptation is. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." The devil tempted Him, but God led Him. So God leads all His children, but with a great difference of purpose. Christ was led to encounter the full force of the foe in

order to conquer as our Champion and Example: we are led where temptations assail, that we may experience just so much conflict, and no more, as may make as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. But in both cases it is true that though the devil tempts, our Father leads us. A guide on the mountains leads the Alpine climber where dangers exist. The summit cannot otherwise be reached. In avoiding or conquering the danger, the traveller's skill, courage and endurance are both tested and improved. His health and manhood, as well as his enjoyment, are secured by his being thus led where dangers abound. But the leader knows what path is practicable, what perils should be shunned, and is ever ready to lend a helping hand.

We are passing through a region partially occupied by the foe. In places least suspected his skirmishers are lurking. We must needs pass through this Samaria to reach Jerusalem. "We must through much tribulation enter the Kingdom." Any step off our way may bring us within range of the enemy's guns, within reach of the dagger of some ambushed assassin. Our confidence is this, that our Father leads us amidst this peril; and it is for Him, and not for our foe, to choose where and when and how we are to be exposed to it. Exposed to it, in some way, we must be; this is our Father's Will, for His children's good. It is vain to suppose that certain conditions of life are exempt from temptation, and to pray that our condition may be so altered that we may

escape it. Our safety is not in some temptation-proof cell, but in having God for our shield while following His guidance where fiery darts may abound. Poverty may tempt us to murmur, deceive, envy, or steal; but could we escape these temptations by becoming rich, we might be tempted to be proud, self-indulgent, forgetful of God and of the heavenly inheritance. The vigorous and healthy may glory in their strength rather than in its Giver; while a sick-bed may tempt to petulance, distrust, and selfish murmuring. Society has its snares, substituting fashionable opinion for Divine truth, and the pleasing of men for the service of God; but the solitude to which we fly for safety may be found equally perilous in the nurture of a morbid imagination, and the companionship of evil desires. If in honour—we may be vainglorious, despise our inferiors, and fancy ourselves free from restraint; if in obscurity—we may sin because unobserved, and make up for lack of fame by reviling the famous. Many talents may tempt us to use them vainly or selfishly; few talents, to hide them as not worth cultivation. Religious privileges may tempt to a ceremonial reliance on them; deprivation may suggest excuses for indifference, or starve the soul. Full assurance of hope may beguile to unwatchfulness; while depression of mind may tempt us to halt in the plain path of practical duties while peering into the misty gloom of our doubts and fears.

"Into what perils soever we have come, let us be sure it was not the Evil Spirit, but God Himself who

ordered the whole frame and condition of our lives, and that this is the best possible for us, though—yea because—it is one of tremendous temptation. Let us be equally sure that He is not our tempter; that He never tempted any man to evil; that we fall into it only when we think He is not with us to deliver us from it" (Maurice). Yet we should pray that God would so guide us that we may not be tempted beyond our strength. However surely we may rely on Divine help in peril, inasmuch as to become the victim of that peril is sin, every true child of God will shrink from it. Each has his special perils, and we reasonably pray to be protected in our most vulnerable part. "It would be a great misfortune to a man with weak lungs to call him to live in a cold, bleak air. So would it be to a man with weak eyes, to fix him in a situation which required much study by candle-light. Now it is to the full as dangerous for the soul of the ambitious man to be put into the road which leads to high stations, or for a man like Balaam to have much to do with money-bags" (Hare). If, careful of our bodily health, we desire not to be lodged where the climate would try our constitution to the utmost; so, anxious for our spiritual health, we ask God to guide us in such a way that outward circumstances may not so accord with inward tendencies, that the resulting temptation might overpower us.

The meaning of the prayer is clear in the light of Divine precepts and promises. We pray that we may not be so brought into temptation as to be overcome

by it; not be carried into it so as to be left in it. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." God does suffer us to be tempted, but we pray that no temptation may be beyond our strength; we pray, not that we may escape being tempted at all, but that our escape may be in the way of endurance and victory. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," sometimes by leading us out of its reach, sometimes by leading us through it and giving special strength to conquer it. The apostle was sorely tempted when, being brought before Nero, his friends "all forsook him," but "the Lord stood with him and strengthened him"; he prayed "God that it might not be laid to their charge"; and he was "delivered out of the mouth of the lion." He exulted in the confidence of faith, saying, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly Kingdom." Through "the valley of the shadow of death," abounding with perils, our Shepherd often leads His flock; and it is our privilege to follow fearless, singing, "For Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

"Since, as David saith, there are in the great sea of this world 'things creeping innumerable,' we have need to pray from the inmost heart, 'O Father, lead us not into temptation. We are surrounded with temptations, but be Thou our help, that we consent

not unto them, and thus be taken and overcome by them.' To a certain younger brother who desired to be free from his evil imaginations, one of the elders replied, 'Thou canst not prevent the birds from flying over thy head, but yet thou canst prevent them from building their nests in thy hair.' And again, the blessed Augustine saith, 'We cannot avoid temptations, but we can, by calling upon God for aid, take heed that they do not overcome us'" (Luther).

This prayer is the natural heart-utterance of every believer. We say—Our Father! we mourn because of past sin committed against Thee; O keep us from fresh grief in grieving Thee! We lament that we have often failed to hallow Thy Name and to do Thy Will; help us in the future! We hate the sins that dishonour Thee and wound our own soul; enable us to conquer them! We distrust ourselves, for we have proved how weak are our own strongest efforts, how slippery the paths on which we walk, how many the snares laid for our feet; uphold us! We follow Thee! but O bring us not where temptation might be too strong for us!

Old Testament prayers express the same desire: "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe. Order my steps in Thy word, and let not any iniquity prevail against me. Remove from me the way of lying. Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments." We pray with Jehoshaphat, "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee."

This prayer, like the rest, is unselfish. It embraces our brethren who are exposed to the same temptations; as on board a ship in danger, we cannot pray for our own preservation without including all the crew. For the whole Church we pray: for struggling, tempted souls altogether unknown to us in distant lands, of other tongues. We realize the "communion of the saints," the brotherhood of all who are on their pilgrimage of trial. "O strange and mysterious privilege, that some bed-ridden woman in a lonely garret, who feels tempted to distrust the love and mercy of God, should wrestle with that doubt, saying the Lord's Prayer; and that she should be thus asking help for those who are dwelling in palaces, yet in their own way are in peril as great as hers; for the student haunted with questions which would seem to her monstrous and incredible, but which to him are agonizing; for the minister in his terrible assaults from cowardice, despondency, vanity, from the sense of his own heartlessness, from the shame of past neglect, from the appalling discovery of evils in himself which he has denounced in others, from vulgar temptations into which he had proudly fancied that he could not fall. Of all this the sufferer knows nothing, and yet for these she prays—and for the statesman . . . for her country . . . for all other countries in their throes of anguish . . . for one and all she cries, 'Lead us not into temptation.' Their temptations and hers, different in form, are the same in substance. They, like her, are tempted to doubt

that God is, and that He is the Author of good and not of evil; and that He is mightier than the evil; and that He can and will overthrow it, and deliver the universe out of it" (Maurice).

III.—Consolation for the Tempted.

1. *Temptation is not sin.*—It only becomes sin when we invite, tamper with, and encourage it; but when we resist and pray against it, faith and fortitude are increased. Sincere prayer against it is evidence of a desire not to yield. We shall never be overcome through the weakness that causes us to lay hold on the arm of Omnipotence. God does not condemn us for obstacles in climbing the heights of holiness, but commends us for our efforts to overcome them. He does not judge us by the side-eddies and counter-currents and tiny whirlpools which here and there make the river seem to flow backward, nor by the rocks in the channel which retard the crested tide; but by the onward flood, which, despite such resisting rocks and returning currents, rolls steadily to the ocean of Infinite Love. If we can say with the Psalmist, "I hate vain thoughts," those thoughts are no evidence that we are wanderers from God; but the hating of them does prove that we are His children.

2. *Temptation is not peculiar to the individual.*—We are not alone in having to suffer it. "Lead *us* not into temptation." All who call on "Our Father" need such help. "There hath no temptation taken

you but such as is common to man." Incident to humanity, it is no disparagement to the individual; no sign that we are specially weak or wicked, that the devil is allowed some special power over us, or that our Heavenly Father is displeased with or has forgotten us. Because we are human we are tempted, and because we are Christian we feel temptation the more keenly.

3. *Christ Himself was tempted.*—He "was made like unto His brethren." All bodily and mental faculties, however abused by us, are in themselves pure and holy, because given by a holy God. These the faultless Christ shared, and through these was tempted. His hunger was real, and His desire to satisfy it intense, but to satisfy it in opposition to the will of His Father would have been sin. "He was in all points tempted like as we are;" otherwise He could not have been an example of conflict and victory. He knew how possibilities of sin attend the exercise of the purest affections, even as shadows are cast from the loveliest flowers. He knew the loneliness the soul may feel when in some wilderness which the devil haunts. He knew the pangs of unsatisfied desire, the yearnings of natural instincts, the depression of mind caused by weakness of the flesh, and the strength which may thus by special circumstances belong to temptations which would be powerless at other times. He who, exhausted by the struggle, needed sympathy and succour, so that "angels came and ministered unto Him," will Himself be present to help us in our temptations.

4. *The Prayer is presented to "Our Father."*—He loves the children He has redeemed. It is not His will that any of His little ones should perish. If a sparrow falls not to the ground without His notice, how surely His eye of love watches, His arm of power is outstretched to help, those who, fearing to grieve Him by sin, ask Him to save them from temptation! He puts this prayer into our hearts, and "He cannot deny Himself." He is "our Father in Heaven," and therefore able to control all the circumstances of our lives, and must be mightier for our weal than all who seek our woe. They who utter this cry to their Father may be sure that "He pitifully beholds the sorrows of their hearts."

IV.—Practical Lessons.

1. *We should not go into temptation.*—If we sincerely pray God not to bring us into temptation, we cannot willingly bring ourselves into it without contradicting our prayer. Its Author said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Guard against the first approach of danger, "avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away." If you ask God not to take you there, never take yourselves there. This lesson is applicable to companionships, books, amusements, which are felt to be, if not sinful, yet paths leading sin-wards. If the precipice is dreaded, beware of the slope. If, subject to dizziness, we ask our guide not to lead us too close to the edge, let us not venture there

to pluck a flower, or look down into the abyss. "The way of sin is down hill. A man cannot stop where he would; and he that will be tampering with dangerous occasions in confidence of his resolution, shall find himself often carried beyond his purpose" (Leighton). "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Some enter into temptation presumptuously, to show their power of resistance; some curiously, to see what the danger is, and taste the allurement; some carelessly, giving no heed to their steps; some imitatively, following where others go; and some pharisaically, boasting their piety and pretending to glorify God by showing what His grace can do. Many, like Eve, begin by looking, till looking leads to longing; longing, to approaching; approaching, to smelling and handling; then to plucking and eating. Often has the case of Achan been repeated: "When I saw among the spoils a Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them." Many, like David, loiter on the roof to gaze at beauty that fascinates, beguiles, ensnares, destroys. Look not off from the path of present duty to gaze upon pleasant but perilous byways; "let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look right before thee." "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." To preserve the streams from pollution, guard the fountain. "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." If we would not have our house burnt

down, let us extinguish the stray spark, the smouldering flame. "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?" They that carry powder must not stand amongst flying sparks. If we dread the jaws of the lion, we must not loiter at the mouth of his den. We should beware how we enter the dungeon-door which shuts of itself with a spring-lock, but cannot be opened without a key. "There is no necessary connection between going into temptation and coming out."

Habits gradually and easily formed may become chains requiring more than human strength to break. The noxious seed may be easily uprooted, but the tree may defy your strength. An infant temptation may be slain, which, full grown, will slay you.

> "Fashion it thus: that what he is, augmented,
> Would run to these and these extremities;
> And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,
> Which, hatched, would, as his kind, grow mischievous;
> And kill him in the shell."

The gentle current may float us into the raging rapids or the cruel whirlpool and over the deadly fall. The writer was once persuaded by a friend to accompany him and his family in a tiny steam-craft from Buffalo down the Niagara river. At first the broad smooth stream gave no sign of its never-ceasing downward flow. But presently the noise of the plunging prow grows less. Now it ceases. We are no longer forcing our way through the water, but are being hurried along by it. The silence, the smoothness, in

other circumstances soothing, are awful to those who now see in the distance a horizontal line suddenly terminating the view. Over it is a white column of mist; between us and it a line of surf. We are rapidly approaching the tremendous fall, when we suddenly shoot into a small creek. An accident to the machinery, or insufficient power to counteract the current, would be fatal. Many a boat with its cargo of precious life has thus been carried over. Inexperience, lack of due precaution, foolhardiness, have been death to many who fancied they could at any moment stem the tide, and safely return to where the stream was gentle, and the landing-place easy to reach.

The whirlpool was afterwards visited. Here the great cataract, surging from its enormous plunge, has worn away a vast crater-shaped basin at the side of the main stream, round which the heaving, foaming waters perpetually revolve. I watched a great tree which had been carried into this whirlpool. Sometimes it gyrated on its own axis; sometimes it rose suddenly in the air, pointing upwards as if some huge giant lifted his arm in distress; then it plunged downwards and disappeared; then as suddenly it shot up again perpendicularly in some other place, and fell back helpless on the whirling tide, ever borne round and round its prison. I looked till I fancied it was a sentient creature struggling to escape into the main stream, and so reach the quiet refuge of the lake below. Again and again it neared the mouth of the great basin, and I thought the main current might

mercifully embrace and rescue it. But no; after a brief struggle it was swept back to repeat the same course of agonizing disappointment. I could bear it no longer and turned away, for I seemed to look upon multitudes of my fellow-creatures, the victims of evil habit. They have ventured on the placid stream of temptation to indulgence that seemed harmless and easy to be resisted when it might threaten injury; they have been lulled by soothing pleasure, and the perilous silence of conscience; they have become self-secure in the purpose of rousing themselves when in danger of going too far; but they have been swept into the deadly whirlpool of sinful habit which is now alternately their chamber of insensibility and torture; they sometimes awake to a sense of their peril, they lift up their arms in despair, they resolve to escape, again and again they think deliverance near, but again and again the power of habit asserts itself, and they are still carried round and round in "the hell of waters" they have made for themselves.

> "Habits are soon assumed; but when we strive
> To strip them off, 'tis being flayed alive.
> Called to the temple of impure delight,
> He that abstains, and he alone, does right.
> If a *wish* wander that way, call it home;
> He cannot long be safe whose wishes roam.
> But if you pass the threshold, you are caught;
> Die then, if power Almighty save you not."—COWPER.

Alas! how many a human moth flutters round the alluring flame till, with singed wings, it falls and dies; how many a fly wilfully gets entangled in a web that seemed so flimsy, yet is so strong. The youth who

would not become the victim of her whose "feet go down to death, and whose steps take hold on hell," must "remove his ways far from her, and *come not nigh* the door of her house." He who would avoid gluttonous excess should "be *not among* wine-bibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." To avoid their ruin, "be not *among* them." He who is in danger of "woe, contentions, babbling, wounds without cause, and redness of eyes" by "tarrying long at the wine," is bidden to "*look not* on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." If he would not experience that "at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder," he should "look not upon it."

A good general is cautious as well as brave, else bravery is foolhardiness. He respects his foe for strength and vigilance if for nothing else, and gives him no opportunity to "steal a march" or assail an unguarded post. He does not go out of his way to "demonstrate," and provoke an unnecessary fight which may involve failure.

> "When fierce temptation, seconded within
> By traitor Appetite, and armed with darts
> Tempered in Hell, invades the throbbing breast,
> To combat may be glorious and success
> Perhaps may crown us; but to fly is safe."—COWPER.

At the battle of Waterloo, a wealthy merchant of Brussels who had been allowed access to headquarters, asked Wellington whether he was not exposing his person to great danger, as shot and shell were falling

around. The general replied, "*You* have no business here, but I am performing my duty." So let us never go into spiritual danger from idle curiosity, but only when duty calls: then, and then alone, may we expect to be safe. In a matter of life or death let us not run dangerous risks, relying on what is "deceitful above all things." "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool." Let there be no sleeping on the Philistine's lap, if we would not have our locks shorn. Piety enfeebled by dalliance with pleasant danger is no match for the enemy, when with strong cords he bursts in to bind and enslave. Shipwrecks are often caused by the captain venturing near a rocky coast, in too great reliance on his own skill, the depth of water and the changeful wind. Alas! how many have "made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience," not by purposely heading upon the visible rocks of sin, but by venturing into the shallow waters of temptation where shoals and reefs are hidden! Let us give a wide berth not only to those headlands, but to these shallows too.

Burglars have been known to send into a house they intended to rob, a child who has secreted himself till night and has then opened the door to the spoilers. If we fear the burglars, let us beware of the child. One temptation fondled instead of strangled, may open the door to a host of devils to rob us of our choicest wealth. Let us not allow the wedge to enter if we would not have our roof-tree split. However thin its edge, if once inside the crack, gentle pressure may be

followed by sturdy blows, till the strongest resolutions and longest formed habits give way. "It is the little rift within the lute, that by and by will make the music mute."

Temptation is like a quicksand, which, when the tide has left it, is firm to the tread, but as soon as the water returns, proves treacherous to the unwary loiterer. The sea has its regular ebb and flow, and the hours may be calculated within which the sand may be visited; but temptation has no such limits. A wave of passion may suddenly rise and convert that pleasure-ground into a deadly swamp, into the mouth of hell.

> "An hour, or more, not meaning any harm?
> It is hypocrisy against the devil;
> They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,
> The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt Heaven."

"The common excuse is, 'We wish to see *life*.' Life! my brother. Depravity is disease, evil is corruption; to call such *life*, is only the gloss of an artful delusion. You can only see life when you see truth, purity, goodness. If we wish to see physical life, we seek it where the pure airs of heaven hue the cheek with health, and the exercises of honest industry sinew the limbs with symmetry and strength; not where life lies marred and crippled with the loathsome disfigurements of self-entailed disease. Let the physician go—and God protect him!—on his benevolent mission into the infected region where the deadly epidemic is doing its ghastly work upon the sad and

weary sufferers; but idle curiosity may not venture there. Evil has its contagion, and sin circulates the subtlest infection" (Loraine).

The writer saw at Chicago notices placed on several houses with the warning, "Small-pox is here"; "Fever is here." The mark of moral pestilence may be seen on the forehead of many a boon companion, and over the entrance of many a saloon of pleasure. Young men boast of freedom. But over how many a door through which they enter to seek it, they might read "*Slavery is here*"! Who is a more abject slave than he who is tied and bound by habits of evil-doing? He often becomes the fag of others or the drudge of adverse circumstances, so that his early boast of liberty has ended in a lifelong slavery, and futile complaints of injustice and tyranny! "Instead of laying the blame on any but yourselves, know that to be free is the same thing as to be wise, to be temperate and just, frugal and abstinent, and lastly, to be magnanimous and brave. So to be the opposite of all these is the same as to be a slave; and it usually happens that those who cannot govern themselves and moderate their passions, but crouch under the slavery of their lusts, should be delivered to the sway of those whom they abhor, and made to submit to an involuntary servitude" (Milton).

An excuse often made for young men's sins is that they must "sow their wild oats." It is forgotten that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Would anyone expect to improve his garden by

sowing weeds in it rather than by rooting them out? Will injury to a tool make it more fit for future use? Is a man the stronger because he was sickly when a child? Is that soldier the braver who, when a youth, yielded like a coward to the foe? "It cannot be the training one receives in the devil's service, but only our determining to desist from it, that fits us for true manly action. Surely such lessons are best learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while the heart is yet soft and pliant, rather than in collision with the sharp adamant of fate, attracting us to shipwreck us when the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite" (Carlyle).

Little drops of water may hurl down mountain-masses. Slowly and gently the tiny rills percolate the soil and undermine the rocky strata, till suddenly the landslip carries away the forest and overwhelms the village. Thus the spiritual nature has often been saturated by allurements to evil, till it has suddenly and for ever given way beneath the pressure. Looking into a long railway tunnel, you see a tiny spark. It seems stationary, but it is approaching constantly, irresistibly, rapidly. Do not loiter on those rails, else the express train will be upon you. A jewelled cup is presented, filled with fragrant poison, and you hesitate to believe that what looks so radiant and smells so sweet can do you harm. Handle not that glittering toy; inhale not that stupefying odour; cast away the goblet if you would not drink the poison. Wisdom

says not, "Look at it, but do not drink it; or if you drink, drink not much"; but—"Taste not at all the sweet Circean cup; he that sips often, at last drinks it up."

The gospel says not, "Go as near to the edge of the precipice as you can without falling over"; but, "Keep as far from danger as you can without sacrifice of duty." It says not, "Venture into the rapids without plunging into the howling abyss"; but, "Turn from it and pass away." It does not advise us to mingle with sinners and handle without being defiled by their toys, but, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch no unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

"Lord, with what care hast Thou begirt us round!
Parents first season us; then Schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws; they send us bound
To Rules of Reason, holy Messengers;
Pulpits and Sundays; Sorrow dogging Sin;
Afflictions sorted; Anguish of all sizes;
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in;
Bibles laid open; millions of Surprises;
Blessings beforehand; ties of Gratefulness;
The sound of glory ringing in our ears;
Without, our Shame; within, our Consciences;
Angels and Grace; eternal Hopes and Fears.
Yet all these fences, and their whole array,
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away."—HERBERT.

2. *We must resist temptation in the way Christ Himself has appointed:* in a spirit of humble dependence, as taught in this prayer. We must not forge weapons of our own, but seek "the whole armour

of God." We must take "the shield of faith, wherewith to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one." We must see "Him who is invisible," if we would overcome the allurements of sense. We must behold the Lamb of God offered for sin, if we would so hate it as to conquer it. We must take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," if we would imitate the Captain of our salvation, who thus parried every hostile thrust, and by Holy Scripture refuted satanic sophisms. In the light of that Word let us look beneath the specious garb temptation wears; let us ask, Will the pleasure promised bear reflection in sickness and death, judgment and eternity? Is it worth the cost of conscience, God, heaven? Thus we shall detect the serpent lurking among the flowers. As on moors or mountains, boggy places may be safely traversed by planting the foot only where tufts of heather grow, so let us tread only where some Divine promises can take root. Above all, we must obey Him who teaches us this petition. Our importunity in urging it is one of God's methods of fulfilling it. We must "watch and pray" if we would not enter into temptation: "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

3. *We should specially guard weak places in our defence.*—Past temptations indicate the joints in the armour by which the arrow most easily enters: the window or door most favourable for the burglar's admission; the part of the fence through which the

cattle may pass to trample down our tender plants; the angle of our sea-bound estate, against which the high tides most threateningly dash. We should fortify with extra toil, and watch with constant vigilance, the weak part of our position, where the foe is most likely to deliver his assault. But while specially guarding weak places, we must not neglect the strong. A fortress has sometimes been captured by scaling the precipice which seemed to render it on that side impregnable. So the father of the faithful yielded to distrust, and Moses, the meekest of men, to irritation and disobedience.

They who are comparatively safe from one sin may be specially liable to another. Righteous Lot, grieved at the profanity of the wicked, may be ensnared by the intoxicating cup, and sink into shameful vice. Wise Solomon may become a fool, ensnared by women's wiles. Strong Samson may yield to seductive weakness. Heroic David may basely bend beneath the yoke of tyrant passion. An inspired prophet may be lured by lucre and preach to please. When we fancy ourselves specially secure through removal from worldly scenes by affliction, we may be exposed to special peril. Foes often lurk in dark shadows. Years of freedom from fierce assault may generate self-security, so that we remit our vigilance and unclasp our armour. Many victors have been vanquished by carelessness after conflict, and many professing Christians have fallen away in old age by ceasing to watch against temptation often conquered.

4. *Turn stumbling-blocks into stepping-stones.*—The opportunity of sinning may be made an opportunity of glorifying God. Blame not the flesh because Satan often employs it as a ground of temptation, but make that flesh a battle-field for winning trophies from the foe. The various faculties of the body and mind which may become occasions of sin may also, when curbed and controlled, become occasions for special glory to God. Chrysostom says, "We do not read, Let not the flesh act or live, but Let not sin reign: for Christ came not to *subvert human nature,* but to *rectify the will.*" We should regulate and use our natural faculties in the service of God. The same weapon which might serve the murderer may also be wielded by the loyal soldier: the moral quality residing not in it, but in him. To preserve our faculties from serving the devil, let them be yielded wholly to God. Let those members which temptation would desecrate become consecrated vessels for the temple. "Neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves unto God, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Body as well as soul belongs to God; sin, the usurper, claims it as his domain; let us deny the claim, resist the usurpation, denounce the invader. Feudal lords held their estates as vassals of the king, and were bound to aid him in his wars in proportion to their holding. The ruler of a kingdom receives its tribute. If we recognise sin as ruler, we shall yield our faculties to its service; but if we give our entire

selves to God, there will be no single faculty left wherewith to serve sin.

Let the hand, when tempted to dishonest grasp or angry blow, be urged in Love's own service to benefit others by honest toil and gentle succour. Let the foot, when bidden by the devil to go his errands, be the more promptly moved forward in the path of God's commands. Let not the wondrous faculty of vision open the door for a rabble of unclean imaginations to enter and pollute the soul, or for sending forth looks of lust or malice; but when thus tempted, let it the more ponder the lively oracles of truth, and become the inlet of images of purity and love. Let the voice, when prompted to utter angry, deceitful, or profane words, the more bear witness for God, plead before His throne, and blend with the anthems of angels. As all we have we hold from Him, let hands, feet, eye, tongue, imagination, memory, will, bearing the mark of His ownership, be devoted to His service. Let the harp which temptation may be preparing for the music of sin vibrate with the harmonies of heaven. Let circumstances which threaten become helps instead of hindrances. Are we inclined to be made angry by some fierce provocation? Let it become an occasion of cultivating patience. Does some sensuous pleasure allure? Let it be a summons to crucify the flesh. Does some accession of fortune tempt us to "the love of money which is a root of all kinds of evil"? Let us seize the opportunity of doing good, and instead of allowing wealth to impoverish the soul, let us there-

with "lay up a good foundation for the world to come." By a godly chemistry, let fragrant essences be distilled from filthy refuse. By a holy husbandry, let deposits which might breed pestilence enrich and fertilize the soil. If, in the course of Divine Providence, we find ourselves in the company of the ungodly, instead of merely resisting their assaults, let us be ourselves assailants. Would they allure us to sin? Let us persuade them to godliness. Instead of simply refusing to be led into the world, let us lead them into the church. Not content with escaping danger, let us save those who would entice us thither. To avoid temptations to evil, let us dwell among incitements to good. If we would escape an epidemic, let us not only avoid infection, but be well supplied with its preventive. We have abundant and efficacious antiseptics. To be secure against evil example, let us cultivate close fellowship with the righteous. Let their sentiments, aims and actions so impregnate and possess our minds that we may be proof against adverse influences. To counteract the chilling frost of the world, let us keep up the temperature of our inner life by devout reading of the Scriptures; by prayerful attendance on gospel preaching; by "showing forth the Lord's death" at the feast of loving memory He has ordained; by self-examination; by intercourse with the godly; and, above all, by habitual and earnest prayer. As we are exposed without ceasing to temptation, we must "pray without ceasing," if we would overcome it.

Thus feeding the furnace of the moral machinery within, let us wisely economize the force created, nor let the steam blow off in mere sentiment and religious enthusiasm. Let us beware of indulging ourselves in lazy religious melancholy, which is often our foe's busy opportunity. Let us be at some work for Christ, so temptation will not find us at leisure to listen. "When a man has nothing to do, Satan will bring grist to the mill, and find him work enough." Let not failure discourage effort, but prompt to new resolve. It may be well to open our hearts to some Christian friend for advice and sympathy. Above all, let us "go and tell Jesus," our great High Priest, who always is at hand to succour and save. Thus we may be sure of victory. The hostile current only carries away those that love to float with the stream. Brave wrestler with temptation, persevere in the strength of God, and you will surely stem the tide and reach the shore. "They shall never perish."

> "I saw him beat the surges under him,
> And ride upon their backs: he trod the water,
> Whose enmity he flung aside, and breasted
> The surge most swoln that met him: his bold head
> 'Bove the contentious waves he kept, and oared
> Himself with his good arms in lusty stroke
> To the shore, that o'er his wave-worn basis bowed,
> As stooping to relieve him. I not doubt,
> He came alive to land."—*The Tempest.*

5. *We should not bring others into temptation.*—As our Lord taught that if we truly ask forgiveness we must also practise it, so also if we pray that God will

not bring us into temptation, we surely must not willingly bring others into it. If we need succour from our Father, we must render it to our brethren. If what we do, though safe to ourselves, encourages others in what is perilous to them, are we acting consistently with this prayer? There are two roads to a village amongst the mountains. One is solid, wide and safe; the other is narrow, slippery, precipitous. By strength, practice, well-nailed boots, I can, without danger, traverse the *mauvais pas*. But suppose by my example others are encouraged to follow who fall and perish. I may assert my liberty and censure their folly; but would it not be more Christ-like if for their sake I took the safer path? If, bathing where the river is deep and dangerous, I make no secret of my enjoyment, and practically recommend others to bathe in the same place; and if, of those who attempt it, some are drowned, would it not be merciful in me to mark the place as "Dangerous," and bathe elsewhere?

All along our coasts lighthouses warn sailors against rocks, and guide them into port. But, alas for humanity! false lights have sometimes been exhibited to allure vessels to destruction, that the wreckers might seize the spoil. Spirits of darkness do this for the ruin of the soul. But, without such fell purpose, it has often happened that the dubious example of Christian professors has misled the unwary to make shipwreck of faith. The more we are trusted as safe guides, the more dangerous is any misleading signal.

Let us be quite sure that what we ourselves allow, prove not a snare to others. As true beacons we are to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." At the Greenwich Observatory a signal is given every day at the exact moment of noon. By this the captains of outward-bound vessels adjust the chronometers by which they calculate their longitude during many weeks, and ascertain their exact position though on the trackless ocean, hundreds of miles from land. An error at the Observatory would disarrange all the calculations of the navigator, and might cause the wreck of many a ship and the loss of many a crew. The reputation of the Observatory for accuracy increases the confidence reposed in it, and also the injury which might result from any inaccurate signal. Christians should specially be careful to give the true time, regulated by the Sun of righteousness, otherwise some who think they may safely follow such example may suffer shipwreck.

St. Paul considered meat offered to idols as differing nothing from other meat. But to some persons eating this meat seemed to be idol-worship, and the example of the apostle might encourage them in an act which would be for them a sinful surrender of the faith. So he said, "If meat maketh my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I make not my brother to stumble." This principle may be applied to a variety of indulgences, not in themselves wicked but dangerous to many, such as the theatre, the racecourse, the ballroom, games of hazard,

intoxicating drinks, etc. Many Christians abstain from them because, however harmless to themselves, such pleasures might prove perilous to others, especially the young. Their personal sanction would be pleaded by those to whom the indulgence would act as the slope towards the precipice, and as the swift current hurrying to the cataract. The higher the character for wisdom, experience and piety, the more potent the example for good or evil. Those therefore who have achieved a reputation for conquering temptation should take special heed lest they lead others into it. "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

Vigilant ourselves, we should show compassion towards those who stumble. Perhaps their temptations were stronger than ours, their advantages less. Perhaps they had not our knowledge, privileges, and help from friends. Exposed to the same assaults, we might ourselves have yielded. Perhaps they resisted long though overcome at last. Our own experience of the force of temptation should make us gentle in our judgments, earnest in our prayers, tender in our treatment of the fallen. The world, except where its own standard has been transgressed and the sin is vulgar, is apt to excuse the fault, or "make a mock at sin," and even dress it up as virtue and give it titles of honour. Pharisaism, on the other hand, proudly gathers up its robes, and sweeps past the transgressor in heartless scorn. We are taught both to abhor the

sin and to pity the sinner. There have been times when the stream of adverse influence that has swept him down was too strong for ourselves, and it is only by Divine mercy that we are now struggling against it. We remember conflicts with the same foe when we also have suffered defeat, and victories which long trembled in the balance and were at last only just won. We have weathered the gale and hope soon to be in port, but we cannot forget how narrowly we escaped shipwreck.

Let us then deal gently with the fallen; cheer them lest they despair, by telling of pardoning mercy and assisting grace; and be ourselves hopeful of their recovery. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Pity the fallen—O! the bitter strife,
The shame, the fear, the anguish of their life.
Assist the fallen—thou may'st need a hand,
For thou may'st fall, who firmly now dost stand.
Seek out the fallen—love them, succour lend,
And thus resemble Christ, the sinner's Friend.
Restore the fallen—thou hast been reclaimed,
For Jesus sought thee, raised thee, cheered, though blamed.
O save the fallen—bliss indeed 'twill be,
With souls thus won, to spend eternity.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEVENTH PETITION.

"BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL."

AS the petition, "Forgive us," refers to the past, and "Lead us not into temptation" to the present, so this "Deliver us from evil" reaches forward to the future. Thus it forms a separate and seventh petition, completing the perfect Jewish number.

The expression *ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ, from the evil*, may be neuter, meaning "evil" in general, or "the evil thing" specifically; or it may be masculine, and rendered, as by the Revisers, "the Evil One." The older and more familiar rendering is sustained by Rom. xii. 9: "Abhor that which is evil," *τὸ πονηρόν*; "cleave to that which is good," *τῷ ἀγαθῷ*. Dean Alford says, "*τοῦ πονηροῦ* is here certainly neuter; the introduction of the 'Evil One,' would here be quite incongruous." Stier says, "The Redeemer has left His own name unmentioned; though Himself the ground, medium, end of every prayer: and can He be thought to have expressly mentioned Satan?"

In defence of the R.V. it is urged that, as the rendering the "Evil One" must be given to the same

Greek word in most other passages, consistency requires the same rendering here. See John xvii. 15; 1 John ii. 14; 1 John iii. 12. Dean Mansel says, "The words may also be rendered 'from the Evil One'; but the neuter is more comprehensive, and includes deliverance from the evil thoughts of one's own heart, and from evils from without, as well as from the temptations of Satan." Thus praying, we seek the final deliverance of the Church from whatever assails and pollutes it: the rescue of the world and all who dwell on it from whatever injures it: the accomplishment of every holy hope; the fulfilment of all millennial prophecy: the perfect blessedness of all who call God "Our Father who art in heaven." Thus viewed, this last petition is the climax of the whole prayer, the chief, permanent, all-comprehensive longing of the believer. If the petition does not refer exclusively to Satan, he is included in it. Of the "temptation" against which we pray, he is the chief promoter; of the "evil" from which we implore deliverance, he is the chief author. It is the fashion of what is called "advanced thought" to deride the idea of a personal devil as a Monastic and Puritan superstition, a fossil of the past. And in popular literature and amusements the personality of Satan is often employed for caricature and ridicule. But if a fact and not a fiction, it is too solemn a truth to be treated with levity. When the devil is made a subject of jesting, his existence is as practically disowned as when formally denied.

Is this doctrine of a personal devil so absurd as to be absolutely incredible? Agnosticism finds no such Being; but ignorance of a fact is no necessary disproof, otherwise ignorance would become positive knowledge. Things are now familiarly known which were recently hidden by distance or minuteness, but which existed as certainly when unknown as when demonstrated by telescope and microscope.

We ourselves are spirits; not so much bodies in which spirits dwell, as spirits for a time occupying bodies. We do not actually see each other, but merely the body thus inhabited. May there not be other spirits existing apart from such a body as may be seen and handled? From one gradation to another, closely linked, the universe below us teems with life. May there not be other existences in the region *above* us? Is it absurd to suppose that man, though at the head of visible existence, is not at the head of all existence; and that as beneath him there are innumerable beings of various orders, so also above him there may be beings superior to himself? Shall the lower and limited region be replete with living creatures, and the higher and unlimited region be a void? If there are globes superior to the earth in size revolving round the same centre, and stars surpassing the earth's sun, is it inconceivable that there may be intelligent beings somewhere in the universe surpassing in capacity dwellers on the earth? If it is thought unlikely that beings with superior capacities should be morally depraved and corrupters of others, we have

only to look among men to see a similar sad combination.

Is it difficult to conceive that such beings can in any way influence our thoughts and conduct? We are, in fact, exposed to influences which we cannot understand. Material things affect our thoughts, emotions, purposes. A picture, a strain of music, a look, the condition of our body, even the state of the atmosphere, may suggest ideas and excite emotions, which may result in actions materially affecting the weal or woe of ourselves and others. We influence each other. Is it incredible that other spirits may be able in some way to influence us without destroying our freedom of will? Circumstances, books, current opinions, fashions, companions, are ever more or less affecting without enslaving our will. No criminal would be acquitted on the plea that his surroundings encouraged the theft or the murder. Consciousness refutes the fallacy that we are thus "creatures of circumstances," and not moral agents. The influence of mind on mind does not destroy responsibility.

But is it likely that the Supreme Ruler would permit the existence of Beings, whose powers are employed in endeavouring to counteract His purposes? Whatever the mystery of the existence of evil, we know it to be a fact. There are, alas! multitudes of evil men and women, some of them possessing superior powers, which are exerted to contravene His laws, and alienate His creatures from allegiance. If this is

actually so as regards evil men, it may also be so as regards evil spirits.

We may venture another suggestion. There have been events in history very difficult to explain by reference merely to circumstances and human nature. Individuals have exercised power in a manner so cruel and disastrous, apparently from motives so inadequate, as to favour the idea of some malignant spiritual influence; so that the solution often suggested of such conduct is in the expression which may have a deeper truth than the speaker means—"the devil is in him!" And so with whole communities, which have sometimes seemed to be urged by an unreasoning impulse into acts of superstitious frenzy, or unprovoked and destructive war. Systems of iniquity have been developed during a long course of ages, which seem beyond mere human power to devise and establish, and bear the stamp of one presiding evil genius. There are minds to which the theory of the existence and agency of the devil furnishes an easier solution to these problems than any explanation attempted by philosophy.

The object of these observations is not to prove the existence of a personal devil, but to show that it is not the impossible absurdity which some assert it to be, and to clear the way for the positive evidence as to the fact. This is afforded by Divine Revelation. We believe that a Witness from the spirit-world has certified the existence of both good and evil spirits. He not only made known the love of Him who sent His Son to save, but clearly warned us of that Evil

One whose malice He came to thwart, and whom, as the prince of darkness, He, the Prince of Life, encourages and enables us to resist. He confirmed the earlier Revelation. The Scriptures He often quoted as the Word of God, speak of the "Evil One" as the serpent who tempted our first parents. Whether he appeared to them in serpent-form, or whether the term is to be regarded as one of the designations of "that old serpent called the devil and Satan," it is personal agency from without which is described in Gen. iii. 1–7. We read that "Satan provoked David to number Israel." The calamities which overtook Job are represented as connected with his malign agency. The Jews were thus familiar with the idea of a personal devil. The Messiah, whom these Scriptures foretold, contradicted some of their opinions, but confirmed this. The account of His temptation must have been communicated by Himself to the Evangelist, who describes how the devil, a person, whether in visible form, or more probably unseen as when he assails ourselves, did tempt Christ. Our Lord said of such assaults, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." There was no sinful principle or tendency in Christ to favour such temptation. That which came was therefore a person. To this personal devil our Lord referred when He said, "If Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" He warned Peter, "Behold, Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat." He accused the Jews as being "of their father the devil, who was a

murderer from the beginning." He spoke of "the enemy, the devil," who soweth tares, as "the Evil One"; and He said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." It was His great work on earth to withstand this foe of God and man: "For this purpose the Son of man was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

The Apostles confirm the truth of the agency of the "Evil One." "The devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus." Peter said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" and spoke of the devil as "a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour; whom" we are to "resist, stedfast in the faith." St. Paul said, "The God of peace shall crush Satan under your feet shortly," and spoke of "the messenger of Satan" sent to buffet him; of "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience"; of not giving "place to the devil"; of "the working of Satan with signs and lying wonders"; and of those who were "in the snare of the devil." St. James exhorts, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." St. John writes to "young men" who have "overcome the Evil One," and says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil"; and in the closing prophetic book describes how, at last, "the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world," is to be "cast into the abyss." If some of these passages can be explained on the evil-principle theory, evidently others refer to a personal agent.

If such a Being exists, it was worthy of the devil's

great Antagonist to teach His disciples to ask deliverance from the "Evil One," the great tempter, the chief agent of evil, the destroyer of the souls of men. As a skilful general often hides his strength from the foe who may thus by false security become an easy prey, so Satan has no stratagem more cunning than persuading those he seeks to destroy that no such destroyer exists. "Dangers are no more light if they once seem light; and more dangers have deceived men than forced them" (Lord Bacon). Let us thank God for revealing to us our foe, and showing us how to conquer him.

The names of this foe are so many lessons of warning. He is "*the Evil One*": evil in its very essence; its author, agent, champion, king. He is Satan, *Adversary*, opposing himself to all that is true and pure, the enemy of all who call God *Father*. He is devil, *Accuser*, accusing us to ourselves to plunge us into despair, accusing us to justice to secure our condemnation. He is Apollyon, *Destroyer*, taking delight in undoing whatever tends to holiness and righteousness, in destroying health and happiness, peace and comfort, purity and life. He is described as a *serpent*, crafty and venomous; as "the *old* serpent," from his long experience in evil; as a "*roaring lion*," from his ferocity; as "*going about*," from his activity; as "*seeking whom he may devour*," from his insatiable rapacity in destruction.

We are warned that we contend with no mean foe. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against

powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places." We are not to be "ignorant of," that is, we are to be constantly vigilant against "his devices." We have need to pray against both "the crafts and the assaults of the devil." We are not indeed to think of the devil as omniscient or omnipresent, for God alone is in every place, and from Him alone "no secrets are hid"; but if there are a multitude of evil spirits whose name is legion, and who serve the Evil One as their superior lord, what they do may be regarded as done by him. Combining as he does so much force of intellect with so much depravity of nature, such power with such subtlety, such long experience in evil-doing with the aid of such hosts of wicked agents, the devil is a foe too formidable to be treated with indifference, self-security, ridicule, or contempt.

How does he tempt? Not overtly, for this would put us on our guard. Not therefore, as often represented in pictures, by hideous deformity or revolting expression at once proclaiming who he is and bidding us beware; but rather hiding himself under the ordinary appearances of daily life, as a serpent may lurk amid perfumed flowers, or a wasp lie hidden in a fragrant peach. He may look at us through a picture, charm us by a song, influence us through a book, beguile us in the person of a friend, whisper to us in our imagination by day or our dreams by night. He seldom appears as an "adversary," but in the guise of a helper; not thwarting our inclinations, but gratifying them; not opposing our will, but encouraging it.

He knows how to adapt his temptations to our special circumstances and temperaments. In the book of Job he is represented as "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth?" Thus Satan "considers" his intended victims, observes their weaknesses, notes their special tendencies, in order to plan his attack. So a farmer surveys his fields, and selects the seed suited for the soil. So a skilful angler chooses amongst his cunningly-prepared flies the one suited to the season, the stream, and the fish.

Sometimes he tempts through curiosity, as with Eve. "In the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." He employs pride, as with David in numbering the people; animal passions, as with Solomon; eager self-confidence, as with Peter; covetousness, as with Judas and Ananias. He comes to us when suffering the innocent infirmities of humanity, as to Christ when hungry and faint. He takes advantage of us when weary in body or dormant in spirit. "While men *slept*, the enemy sowed tares." He pretends friendship when most malignant, as Joab, when he took Abner aside and then stabbed him; and as Judas, when he kissed his Master in the act of betrayal. He can make use of the well-meaning but mistaken kindness of our most trusted friends to beguile us from duty; as when he influenced Peter, from motives of affection, to say, "That be far from

Thee, Lord!" But Jesus detected Satan in the disguise of Peter, and addressed the foe—who was using the friend to persuade to self-indulgence instead of self-sacrifice—"Get thee behind me, Satan! for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." The devil employs even the truth of God as a weapon against those to whom that truth is dear. He dared to assault even Him who is "The Truth" with quotations from His own word, using as his plea, "It is written." Thus many have been deceived and allured to evil by what at first seemed deference to revealed truth, but was really Satan's perversion of the spirit under disguise of its letter. "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." He thus makes the standard of truth an auxiliary to falsehood, and clothes sin in the garb of virtue. He often commends covetousness as prudence, anger as manliness, revenge as justice, prodigal excess as hospitality, frivolity as needful recreation, fashionable vice as respect to the usages of society, damnable licentiousness as pardonable gaiety.

> "And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
> The instruments of darkness tell us truths;
> Win us with honest trifles, to betray us
> In deepest consequence."—*Macbeth.*

An illustration of Satan's beguiling to destroy, was one day witnessed by the writer when rambling near Scawfell. His guide, stooping down over the grassy bank of a small mountain-stream, remained for a few minutes perfectly quiet, and then brought up a large

trout. He knew its favourite resort, gently stroked and "tickled" its back, soothed and charmed, then grasped and captured it. So "the devil's policy is to tickle his victims to death, and damn them with delights." He knows how to cast a fair screen over a foul picture, which, seen at once in all its native grossness, would revolt the beholder, who is lured by the dissolving view which partially conceals till it gradually displays its true features to the now fascinated eye. He sugars the poisoned cup. St. Paul said, "We are not ignorant of his devices." We must be stronger and wiser than the apostle if we can safely cease to watch and pray against "the wiles of the devil." Only when "filled with the Spirit" are we safe from the Evil One.

The temptation of our Lord teaches both our liability to danger, and how we may overcome. He was exposed to the devil's malignity when separated from wicked men and the noisy world, in a solitude specially favourable for communion with heaven. Thus we learn that no season of religious seclusion, no scenes of rural solitude, are a security from a foe who may specially assail us when we regard ourselves specially secure. As our Lord, when alone in the wilderness and needing human sympathy, was exposed to Satanic approach; so the devil may be waiting for us in some desert of affliction, ready to make our sorrow, instead of a security against sin, the occasion of our falling into it, and the absence of human sympathy an opportunity of forbidden solace. As our great Example was

assailed when hungry and faint, so when we are suffering any deprivation the devil may tempt us to seek the satisfaction of what is natural and right in itself, in some method which is wrong. As Christ's very faith in His Father's care was employed by the devil as an argument for presumption; so, when we are enjoying some season of special assurance of the Divine favour, the witness of the Spirit to our adoption may be perverted into an occasion of boastful recklessness and a testing of God's grace. As the true Prince was tempted by the usurper to secure the kingdoms of the world for their good by other than lawful methods, so our very zeal for God and men may become the devil's opportunity for urging us to attain holy ends by unholy methods, thus really worshipping Satan when seeming to be most zealous in our homage to God.

If our Lord was thus assailed, can we expect to escape? If to Him who said "the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me," yet that false prince did come, how certain it is he will come to us in whose hearts there is so much which he may claim as his own! The Ephesian Church was addressed as composed of those who had been "created in Christ Jesus unto good works"; yet they were exhorted not to "give place to the devil," and warned against "the fiery darts of the wicked one." However great therefore our spiritual advantages, the greater should be our vigilance.

Our Lord's example shows us how to conquer. He

did not employ weapons out of our reach. He did not entrench Himself in His Divinity. He fought as man, and as men we are encouraged by His victory. He quoted our Scriptures as one of ourselves. He contended, not that as the eternal Son He could live without bread, but that as one of mankind "every word of God" was sustenance. He placed Himself on our level when He quoted the command against putting God to the test, and in any degree bowing down to the devil; and so encouraged us to resist because He conquered humanly, "tempted like as we are."

Such illustrations of the character and power of the devil may well rouse us to watchfulness and prayer. He is not omnipotent, but great must be the power of him who is described by Christ as the "prince of this world"; and by St. Paul as "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Our encouragement is this, that the world is not left to this "Evil One," but that the Son of God has come to destroy his works. No wonder the devil strove to resist Him. He excited Herod to slay Him in His infancy; tempted Him to save Himself and so leave men to perish; thought to overwhelm Him with sorrows, and crush Him by betrayal to His foes when He said to them, "This is your hour and the power of darkness"; then stirred up the Jews to crucify Him, and yet suggested that He might save Himself and come down from the cross. But Jesus conquered, by resisting every inducement to evil; by suffering every

sorrow ordained; by submitting to the very death which seemed defeat, but which proved to be victory; by rising from the grave which seemed secure as His lasting prison; and by ascending as our victorious champion to God. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in" His cross. Now at the right hand of God He lives and reigns, to aid us by His intercession, to strengthen us by His Spirit, to overrule all events for our good, to reign until all His enemies, and this "Evil One," be made His footstool.

Let us rejoice in His ability to succour and save. If Satan is our accuser, Christ is our Advocate. If our foe condemns, our Friend acquits. If the devil tempts, Jesus prays. If the strong man armed attacks, the Stronger than he protects. If the serpent beguiles and envenoms, the Seed of the woman will crush his head. The lion that devours is no match for the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He that hath "the power of death" is vanquished by the Prince of Life. Satan the adversary must yield to Emmanuel the Almighty Friend, Apollyon the destroyer to Jesus the Saviour. If myriads of demons obey Beelzebub, our Leader is surrounded by "an innumerable company of angels," who under His direction are "ministering spirits" for the heirs of salvation. "More are they that are with us than they that are with them." The Evil One is not at the same time with all he seeks to destroy, but Jesus says to every one of His disciples, "I am with you always." By the help of this ever-present Saviour, "we know

that whosoever is born of God sinneth not"; not habitually, not fatally, "but He that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the Evil One toucheth him not." No fatal injury is done to those for whom He intercedes: "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

Satan shares not in any sense the authority and power of God; is God's enemy, not His minister; is the object of God's holy anger, as the foe of all goodness and happiness; and therefore we are not to "give place to the devil" as an inevitable necessity, but to resist him "stedfast in the faith," assured that God is against all evil, and will eventually "subdue all things unto Himself." Therefore we are to be workers together with God in conquering "the Evil One." Imitating Him, let this petition, like the rest, be accompanied by appropriate efforts. While asking from God deliverance from Satan, let us not lay ourselves open to his assaults, nor listen to his wiles. Let every evil desire be abhorred as the devil's suggestion. In every forbidden pleasure, however beautiful it may appear, let us hear the serpent's hiss; turn from it and pass away. Let neither threats nor bribes turn us from the narrow path. Let us so act in our conflict with the Evil One, that the eulogy of Milton may be merited by us: "No menace could divert him from his purpose; no intimidation on the one hand, and no promise of emolument on the other, could alter the serenity of his countenance, or shake the firmness of his soul." Thus imitating our

Great Leader, in His name we may confidently set ourselves

> "Against whate'er may tempt, whate'er seduce,
> Allure, or terrify, or undermine.
> Be frustrate, all ye stratagems of hell,
> And devilish machinations come to nought!"
> —*Paradise Regained.*

When Apollyon in his fiercest form assaults us in our pilgrimage, and "straddles quite over the whole breadth of the way," let us boldly face him with a renewed avowal of loyalty to our only Lord, and say, "I have given Him my faith, and sworn my allegiance to Him; and, to speak truth, I like His service, His company and country; leave off to persuade me, I am His servant, and I will follow Him." When the devil who tempted us to hesitate at the wicket-gate, to turn aside into bypath meadow, to slumber in the arbour, brings against us his own work to crush us with despondency, let us say with Christian, "All this is true, and much more which thou hast left out; but the Prince whom I serve and honour, is merciful and ready to forgive; these infirmities possessed me in thy country, but I have groaned under them, been sorry for them, and have obtained pardon of my Prince." However fierce the fight, the shield of faith will "quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One," and the sword of the Spirit wielded with prayer will enable Christian to say, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Thus may we realize the vision of the dreamer—"With that, Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings,

and sped him away, that Christian saw him no more."

The Evil One often tempts experienced Christians by a false assurance, that because they have won many victories and have conquered their old sins, they may remit vigilance. "We are never safe: the very stubble of our old sins may run into our eyes and blind us; the dregs of them may choke us; the ashes of them may kindle again and consume us. Therefore do we always need the present help of the Comforter, in order that His conviction may abide in our souls full of life and power; so that the Prince of this world may be judged in us also, even as he was judged by our Lord" (Hare). The Evil One was condemned, despoiled, dethroned by Christ in the wilderness, in Gethsemane, on the Cross, at the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Pentecost: in the case of every believer turned "from the power of Satan unto God." Our Champion has given Satan his death blow. We fight secure of victory. Let us turn the devil's weapons against himself, and make his assaults occasions of our triumph. As St. Paul not merely endured "the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him," but made weakness an occasion of fresh strength and gloried in his infirmity; as Christ "by death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," so let us turn every assault on his part into a victory on ours, ascribing all the glory to Him. "Thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

II.—"The Evil" caused by yielding to the "Evil One"—The Result of Sin.

Temptation yielded to "brought death into the world, and all our woe." "By sin came death." Whatever might otherwise have been the lot of man, death as we know it, with all its circumstances of sickness, pain, infirmity, dread, anguish and mourning, is the penalty included in the threatening, "In the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt surely die." The very ground was cursed by triumphant temptation. Sorrow and anxiety were superadded to toil. We are not dependent on ancient records for proof that sin causes suffering. Physical laws of health are expressions of the Divine will; and violation of them, or neglect of them, entails various and heavy penalties. Many of the plagues that have decimated crowded cities have been caused by the wilful blindness, the selfish apathy or greed which have neglected the first essentials of health—pure water, fresh air, and cleanliness. Many diseases are brought on by excessive indulgence of the appetites, many accidents by recklessness. Where the sufferer himself is not blameworthy, many pay the penalty of others' faults; and in the case of inherited and constitutional disorders, the solemn word uttered on Sinai is often illustrated, the sins of the father being visited on the children "to the third and fourth generation."

Think of the tens of thousands of drunkards who bring disgrace upon their families, ruin on their

homes, brokenness of heart on parents, wives, children. By prodigality, pride, improvidence, indolence, multitudes are beggared; by avarice and hoarding, multitudes more are left to suffer or perish, not because there is not enough and to spare, but because the stewards have yielded to the temptation of regarding what was entrusted to them as their own. Think of all the sorrows caused by an ungoverned temper, angry words, cherished hatred and revenge; evils abiding and still extending like undulations in water, long after the first provocation. Think of the national disasters resulting from ambition whether of princes or peoples, the cruel wars of contending factions and rival dynasties, the woes of millions resulting from the caprice or pride of one; the miseries entailed by cruel superstitions, blind prejudices, imperious customs, false principles of legislation, oppressive governments. If we clearly see so much of the undoubted and immediate consequences of sin, how enormous must be the totality of "the evil" which, whether we see the connection or not, has been caused by yielding to the temptation into which we pray not to be brought; by serving rather than resisting "the Evil One"!

The word of God teaches us to regard all such sufferings as in themselves evil. The Stoicism which affects to treat them with indifference, or to think them good, is contrary to human nature and the whole testimony of history. Men in all ages and countries have uttered one cry of distress because of abounding evil, and in various forms have united in one earnest

prayer for deliverance. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Christianity encourages resignation, by teaching us that God is above all the evil; but it nowhere teaches us to regard evil itself as good. Our Father takes the weapons aimed to hurt us and turns them into instruments to help us; but that which forged and aimed them is evil nevertheless. He converts what the devil intended for poison into heavenly medicine, which but for sin would not be needed. Poverty may be overruled to increase our spiritual store, and sickness to promote our soul's health, but poverty and sickness are evil and not good. The light afflictions that "work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," are afflictions nevertheless; and though "afterward they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness," yet "they are not joyous, but grievous." They are mercifully utilized for the purifying of our faith, "which is much more precious than gold that perisheth," because at present there is a "need be" for the process; but were there no inducements luring us to sin, there would be no necessity to be "in heaviness through manifold temptations." Let us not envy the martyrs as though such sufferings are essential to victory;

> "Nor think who to that bliss aspire
> Must win their way through blood and fire!
> The writhings of a wounded heart
> Are fiercer than a foeman's dart."—KEBLE.

But both the bleeding body and the wounded spirit, although giving occasion for the exercise of faith and

the winning of reward, are in themselves evils which we may lawfully shun and deprecate as not of God.

Christ did not teach us to regard evils as good, but as the work of the devil, whom He came to vanquish. He unloosed the cords with which He said Satan had bound the cripple (Luke xiii. 16). "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." He did not submit to them as a necessity, nor bid us sit down under them in indolent despair or fatalistic apathy. He combated the evil of hunger, and fed the multitude; the evil of disease, and cured the sick; the evil of infirmity, and healed the lame and the blind. He rebuked the winds and waves that threatened shipwreck; He cast out the demons that possessed the insane; He vanquished death and the grave. He Himself suffered as our High Priest, but those sufferings were in themselves evil. The cup which He drank in Gethsemane was in itself not sweet but bitter, and as our Example He prayed to be spared the drinking of it. His murder was the greatest atrocity the world ever committed; and, though overruled for man's salvation, was the culminating curse of the nation that perpetrated it—the evil of evils. We therefore may be comforted in all our troubles by the permission to think of them as evils from which we may pray our Father to deliver us.

No! evil cannot be good; it arises from sin; it is not the normal condition of the world, but a frightful disorder which is to be corrected, against which we are to contend together with God, for universal deliverance.

In our present state of discipline we dare not ask to be kept from all suffering, which may be needed for our spiritual welfare, but that we may be delivered from all evil which might injure the spirit. Our Father, "from seeming evil still educing good," knows when that which in itself is *real* evil can be turned into merely *seeming* evil, by changing its harmful into helpful tendencies; and therefore we offer this petition with reservation; we ask our Father to deliver us from trials which might make *us* evil by leading us into sin.

Mankind have universally sought deliverance from evils, but this has been the commencement and burden of their prayer. Christians are taught to begin with God, not with self. We first look up to Him as "our Father." We contemplate His holiness, wisdom, goodness. Reverencing His perfections and seeking His glory, desiring His will to be everywhere done, we may confidently because filially pray, "Deliver us from evil." This gives us hope, that we have not to expect deliverance by mere human efforts, which have been so often frustrated, but by the agency of the Almighty Father. "We have not to work our way upwards by stairs winding, broken, endless, to an indefinite shadowy point, which we are afraid to reach, lest it should prove to be nothing. We begin from the summit; we find there the substance of all the hope men have drawn from the promising but changeable aspects of the cloudland below; we see that all the darkness of earth, all its manifold forms of evil, have come from

the rays being intercepted which would have scattered it, and shall scatter it altogether. Therefore we pray boldly, 'Deliver us from evil,' knowing assuredly that we are praying to be set free from that to which the will of the Creator is opposed" (Maurice).

This deliverance is effected in various ways. The evil dreaded may be altogether removed, or we may be sheltered amid the storm, guarded in the assault, and so strengthened as to sustain no injury. We may not only be enabled to endure, but to rejoice, so that the season of greatest trial may become one of greatest privilege, and the evils most dreaded promote our eternal good. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of trials." Let us leave the method with Him, and then with fullest assurance pray, "Deliver us from evil."

This petition, like the rest, has its practical lessons. We come to the throne of grace in company with our brethren, all exposed to similar evils, and say, "Deliver us." If we ask deliverance for them, we should promote it. How can I pray God to save those whom I am too indolent or selfish to succour? Sincerely to offer this prayer will stimulate philanthropy; succouring the poor and the sick, teaching the ignorant, lifting the fallen, comforting the sad, reclaiming the drunkard, promoting peace at home and abroad, reforming abuses, encouraging righteous legislation, and in every way according to our opportunity being "fellow-workers with God," in delivering the world from the evil against which we pray.

III.—"The Evil" in Ourselves.

We have been viewing the streams, we come now to the source; this is emphatically "the evil": those surround us, this is within us, the heart which is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Whatever may be said of evolution from lower to higher forms of physical organization, the word of God declares the fact of moral degeneracy. This does not consist in any specific form of vicious indulgence, but in the generic root of ungodliness. The evangelical doctrine does not assert that all men are depraved in the sense of outward wickedness, but of disregard to the Divine Will. The depravity of vice is happily far from being universal, but the depravity of setting up self-pleasing as the rule of life is, alas! characteristic of the race. This leads men into different paths, according to the inclinations of each; and though the path chosen may for a time happen to concur with the Divine Will, as soon as this opposes the human will the latter prevails, with all its attendant evils. St. Paul, describing his spiritual condition prior to faith in Christ, says: "I find then the law, that to me, who would do good, evil is present . . . bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members." In all the circumstances of life, in persons of all temperaments, we are exposed to evils, and need to pray for deliverance. "Deliver us from the evil, whatsoever it is, that lurks even in the best of good things: from the idleness that grows out of youth and fulness of bread

—from the party-spirit that grows out of our political enthusiasm or our nobler ambition—from the fanatical narrowness which goes hand in hand with our religious earnestness—from the harshness which clings to our love of truth—from the indifference which results from our wide toleration—from the indecision which intrudes itself into our careful discrimination—from the folly of the good, and from the selfishness of the wise, good Lord, deliver us" (Dean Stanley).

"The evil" is not ourselves, originally, naturally, necessarily, by any Divine appointment. It is not resident in the body, as some have taught, else how hopeless would be our condition, ever dragging about with us a corrupting corpse from which death alone could free us! No, it is not in the body, but in the evil use of it. It is not in sorrow, which, though the result of sin, may be overruled for our eternal good, but in our impatience and distrust. It is not in our joys; as if the beauties with which the Creator has thickly strewn our path, the pleasure linked with the healthy exercise of every faculty, the delights of knowledge, social intercourse, endearing relationships, had in them a secret poison, and must be regarded with suspicion and fear in proportion to their sweetness; —no, but in our abuse of these blessings. It is not in the world itself; for we must live and work in it; must not dare to quit it till the Master calls; cannot if we would, should not if we could, come out of it by selfish isolation and indolent seclusion: but in being worldly in spirit, being *of it* as well as *in it*,

making the present world supreme. Christ was in the world, sharing its joys, sorrows and companionships, yet in Him was no evil. The evil is sin, and the root of all sin self-will. Outward temptation would be harmless but for this. Self-will is "the evil" of all evils.

While this remains unchecked there can be no true peace. Apart from evils caused by it, this condition of the soul is one of degradation and disquiet. "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The soul is made for God, and can never be at peace until centred in Himself. Diderot, the infidel Cyclopædist, makes a character in one of his plays say: "To do wrong is to condemn ourselves to live and find our pleasure with wrong-doers; to pass an uncertain and troubled life in one long and never-ending lie; to have to praise with a blush the virtue we fling behind us; to seek a little calm in sophistical systems, that the breath of a single good man scatters to the winds; to shut ourselves for ever out from the spring of true joys, the only joys that are virtuous and sublime; and to give ourselves up, simply as an escape from ourselves, to the weariness of mere frivolous diversions, in which the day flows away in half-oblivion, and life glides slowly from us, and loses itself in waste." Another votary of pleasure, who, to silence remorse, encouraged himself in unbelief, has left this sad testimony to the bitterness of "the evil": —

"And dost thou ask what secret woe
I bear, corroding joy and youth?
And wilt thou vainly seek to know
A pang e'en thou must fail to soothe?
It is that settled, ceaseless gloom
The fabled Hebrew wanderer bore,
That will not look beyond the tomb,
But cannot hope for rest before.
What exile from himself can flee?
To zones though more and more remote,
Still, still pursues where'er I be
The blight of life—the demon THOUGHT."

Sooner or later, mostly in this life, always in the next, the votary of evil, the slave of self-will, discovers that the pleasure promised by sin is a delusion, and its seeming good evil only. A wise Chinese proverb says, "Who finds pleasure in evil and pain in virtue, is a novice in both." Sin is the object of the believer's chief abhorrence and resistance. It burdens the conscience, disturbs peace, prevents usefulness, darkens hopes, and hinders converse with heaven. There is no real evil in what the world calls dishonour, poverty, pain. Sin is disgrace indeed, dragging us down from our true nobility, whatever our earthly distinctions; it is poverty, whatever our store; and sickness, though the body be robust; and death, while we seem to live. As a man's life consists not in what he has but what he is, so his poverty is not the lack of "things" but of goodness. The wounds made by sorrow have no poison in them, and soon heal; but sin envenoms and destroys. Disease may mark the body, but "the evil" brands the soul. It is this which militates against the whole prayer. Do

we say "Our Father"? This prevents a filial spirit, and separates us from God and one another. Do we add "in heaven"? This unfits for its holiness, and obscures our hopes of reaching it. "Hallowed be Thy name"? This dishonours it. "Thy Kingdom come"? This hinders it. "Thy will be done"? This resists it. "Give us our daily bread"? This renders no thanks. "Forgive us our debts"? This augments them. "As we forgive"? This exacts. "Bring us not into temptation"? By this we bring ourselves into it. The seventh petition therefore appropriately closes, as it summarizes the prayer—*Our Father! deliver us from evil.*

All men naturally pray against temporal evils; those who are taught by the Holy Ghost pray also and chiefly against "*the* evil." The former seek escape from what is inconvenient to themselves, the latter from what is displeasing to God. "Evils" are light and transitory, soon forgotten, and leave no trace but the "good" they "work together" to produce in the heart; but sin, "the evil," is unmitigated, permanent, destructive. The unregenerate may hate and strive against some special form of moral evil, as drunkenness; but Christians strive to destroy the root out of which all the branches grow. Others may dread the consequences, but these hate the cause. Others may join in the petitions for bread and pardon; but they alone who truly say, "Our Father," truly pray, "Deliver us from evil." Is this our earnest prayer? If we are not seeking deliverance from sin above

all other evils, its consequences cannot be escaped. There is no escape from its evils but by salvation from itself.

We are not left in doubt as to the possibility of such deliverance. To answer the prayer He Himself taught, the Son of God came into the world. This was His one great purpose; "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." As our Example, He so ruled His own strong human will that it was ever subservient to the supreme authority of God, and He said, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done." His whole life was one of self-abnegation. "He pleased not Himself." "He gave His life a ransom for many." By His atonement He removed the evil of condemnation, and by His Spirit He destroys the evil principle in the heart. He constrains us by His own love to love Him in return, and thus prompts us to that entire surrender which is the sure corrective. Thus the Baptist described Him as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,"—the *sin*, not the sins: He does take these away with all their manifold evils; but He does more by taking away the root, the producing cause, the very principle of evil, the *sin* of the world. To Him who taught us thus to pray, we look for the deliverance which He died and lives to accomplish. "Good Lord! deliver us. By Thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation; by Thine Agony and bloody Sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion, by Thy precious Death and Burial, by Thy glorious

Resurrection and Ascension, good Lord! deliver us."

We look for the coming of the Kingdom in this world, when the victory over evil shall be complete. Till then we cannot escape "evils," but we may be delivered from "the evil." Paul and Silas were suffering the evils when they were in the inner prison, with bleeding wounds and feet fast in the stocks; but delivered from "*the evil*," they were praying and singing to God, and the prisoners were listening in wonder. Sufferings merely external may be easily endured when the heart's great malady is healed; as the roaring wind and the rattle of rain and hail at the windows outside do not diminish the pleasure of a company of loving friends, with cheery converse and sweet music, before a blazing hearth. "Outward troubles do not disturb inward peace, but an unholy affection doth. All the winds without, cause not an earthquake; but that within the earth's own bowels doth" (Leighton). "One drop of sin hath more evil in it than a sea of sorrow."

The entire prayer is an argument in support of the closing petition. "Our Father in heaven;" save Thy children, and let us not, by yielding to evil, grieve Thee: "Hallowed be Thy Name;" keep us from the evil that dishonours Thee: "Thy Kingdom come;" let us not, by yielding to evil, retard it: "Thy will be done;" let us not by sin oppose it: "Give us this day our daily bread;" preserve us from the evil of ingratitude: "Forgive us our trespasses;" let us not

repeat them: "Bring us not into temptation;" lest we fall into sin: "But deliver us from evil." Deliverance is the climax of the prayer. Not "evil," but salvation is the closing note. O blessed hope! O glorious certainty, that all who call God Father will some day be delivered perfectly and for ever from evil of every kind! Dying Jacob invoked "the Angel that redeemed him from all evil"; and we will adore the Saviour who for us conquered the "Evil One"; and with the apostle will exult in the assurance, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work."

The Author of the prayer is Himself the Mediator by whom it is fulfilled. He reveals God as "Our Father"; saying, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father:" He hallows the "Name" by exhibiting the nature of God: of "the Kingdom," He is the Vicegerent and Head: "the Will" was perfectly done by Him, and, through the Holy Spirit He gives, is done by us: the "Daily Bread" is a symbol of Himself, the manna from heaven: "Trespasses" are forgiven through His sacrifice: He is the most illustrious example of "Temptation" resisted, and the Giver of the grace by which we resist: He conquered the Evil One, neutralized the evils of sin, and delivers us from the power of evil by His love "shed abroad in the heart."

"A safe stronghold our God is still,
A trusty shield and weapon;
He'll help us clear from all the ill
That hath us now o'ertaken.

The ancient prince of hell
Hath risen with purpose fell;
Strong mail of craft and power
He weareth in this hour;
On earth is not his fellow.

With force of arms we nothing can,
Full soon were we down-ridden;
But for us fights the proper Man,
Whom God Himself hath bidden.
Ask ye, who is this same?
Christ Jesus is His name,
The Lord Sabaoth's Son;
He and no other one
Shall conquer in the battle."

—LUTHER—CARLYLE.

—o—

Against the powers of darkness,
With hellish craft and rage,
Our heavenly Captain calls us
Incessant war to wage:
But who would be deserter
From such a noble fight?
We're sure of deathless triumph,
We struggle for the right.

We'll bless Thee for the battle,
We'll glory in the strife;
We'll shout at call of trumpet,
We'll win eternal life:
Strong in the strength of Jesus,
And in His Spirit brave,
Crowned through eternal ages,
We'll sing His power to save.—N. H.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOXOLOGY.

"FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN."

THOUGH omitted by the Revisers, a doxology so dear to our associations will long be used as expressing scriptural truth and an appropriate response. It reminds us of David's thanksgiving, "Thine, O Lord, is the power, and the glory: Thine is the Kingdom, and Thou art exalted as head above all." The Apostles Paul, Jude, and John, record similar ascriptions of praise: "To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne." The doxology is implied in the prayer; for His must be "the Kingdom" who is asked to do kingly acts; and He must possess adequate "power" who is asked to accomplish what needs Divine strength; and to God alone must belong the "glory" of all His works. It is adoration naturally arising from devout hearts, and has been hallowed by immemorial usage in the Christian Church.

I.—The Doxology a Confession of Faith.

1. *The Kingdom.* — In ascribing to God the Kingdom, we deny that it is the devil's, from whom we have just asked deliverance. The "Evil One" who tempted our Lord by the allurements of the world, saying, "This is delivered unto me, and unto whomsoever I will I give it," is a usurper; his pretended kingdom is one of darkness and falsehood, to be overthrown for ever. The Kingdom is God's altogether, unchangeably, eternally, and this God is our Father in heaven. The kingdom of *Nature* is His. Its laws owe their origin to Him, and if He pleases He can suspend or change them. The kingdom of *Humanity* is His. Men aspire to control each other, to mould society, to rule in larger or lesser spheres, claiming a Divine right to do wrong. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" It cost the boaster seven years of humiliation to learn that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." Often have proud aristocracies and turbulent democracies acted as if God had vacated His throne; as if human might was Divine right; as when fallible men have pretended to be Christ's infallible representatives, condemning those who questioned their authority as guilty of rebellion against God; or when the headship of Christ in His Church has been claimed by princes, prelates, presbyteries, congregations, as if their decisions must be accepted as endorsed by His sign manual; as though the abuses

and corruptions incident to every human system could be Divine; and as if efforts towards reformation must be repressed as presumptuous interference with God. All such claims need to be held in check by the avowal that the Kingdom is not man's—ignorant, foolish, frail; but God's, the infinitely Wise, Holy, Good, our Father; to whom in all controversies our final appeal is made.

If the Kingdom is our Father's, every one of His children may claim its privileges and service. The poorest peasant with the proudest peer, the meanest servant with the mightiest monarch, may rejoice in being fellow-subjects of the one King; there being for each some allotted place, some work, some honour —for each the watchful care of the loving Father, whose is the Kingdom. "Thine is the Kingdom" means: "We are Thy subjects, yielding homage not to worldly opinions and personal interests, but to Thee our only Lord." He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom"; He "opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers," and will say, "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom."

2. *The Power.*—It would be vain to ask favours of a titular king who might promise, though unable to perform. Our Father has both the might and the right. The kingdom of nature is not endowed with independent powers. The King does not sleep on His throne while impersonal forces work their will. We are not subjected to unfeeling, irresistible laws; we

are not reeds shaken by the wind, pebbles rounded by the wave, dewdrops exhaled by the sun; whatever the forces of Nature and our feebleness, we affirm our confidence in our Father's all-controlling power. His Son said: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"; so that power is in the hand of gentleness, of Him who blessed little children and cleansed the leper.

The power does not belong to man, great as are his achievements. The steamship plunging forward in the teeth of the wind, piercing the crests of the mountain-waves, seems to defy the forces of Nature: but this illustrates not man's resistance to those forces, but his obedience to the laws which govern them. Steam and machinery avail us only when in using them we render homage to the power of God. The victories of modern science are achieved, not by compelling Nature to conform to our theories, but by building our theories on a reverent study of Nature; so that in science as well as morals it is true, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"; the most docile and obedient making the resources of the universe their own. All our boasted victories of science over matter are so many tokens of the truth that "Thine is the power."

So with human life and history. There is power in wealth and station; much more in genius; more still in goodness; but all comes from the Divine Mainspring. We are apt to regard the agency and overlook its Lord. Yet Providence often teaches that

calculations based on human probabilities may be utterly falsified. The wisest have been controlled by fools, the strongest overthrown by babes. Many a Goliath has fallen by a stripling's stone. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor favour to men of skill." When "we have no might against this great company; neither know we what to do," we can say—"but our eyes are upon Thee." Thus, when all seemed lost, the Founder of the Church burst the tomb and ascended to His throne. "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together" against the fishermen of Galilee; but they said, "Lord, Thou art God." *Thine is the power!* "Then they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness," and victory was not with the princes, but with the Nazarene. When Pilate boasted, "Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and power to release Thee?" Jesus replied, "Thou couldst have *no power* against me, except it were given thee from above." So, whenever we see power in hands least fit to wield it, faith looks up and says, "Thine is the power."

In all efforts to extend the Kingdom, let us remember that as the work is God's, so is the power to accomplish it. We might well despair if left to our own resources, but we believe that "we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us." Alas for those who offer this ascription, and yet resist the Spirit! But what consolation is theirs who embrace

the power which is used for their succour. "He giveth power to the faint." I may glory in my weakness if the power of Christ rests upon me. I am safe in my Father's care, for His is the power; and Jesus said of His sheep, "They shall never perish; no one is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

3. *The Glory.*—The glory of God is the manifestation of perfect wisdom, holiness, and love. His glory is inseparable from the highest happiness of the Universe. How difficult it is to render all the glory to Him without trying to retain some for ourselves. In glorifying our country, its greatness and fame; or our own Church, its methods and successes, is there never a disguised glorification of ourselves as belonging to it? Are we equally ready to praise whatever is excellent elsewhere? In the spirit of this ascription we should feel that it is God's to give, not our own to clutch and boast. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name be the praise." We may ask nothing which would not be for His honour. We acknowledge His royal prerogative to give what we ask—*Thine is the kingdom:* His capacity to secure the gift—*Thine is the power:* His honour in bestowing—*Thine is the glory.* The doxology is thus a confession of the faith which is essential to the efficacy of every true prayer.

The Dean of Canterbury thus sums up the prayer's confession of faith: "The Church depends solely on the presence of Christ. Where Christ is, there His Church is; and where love and holiness are, there Christ is. Wherever we find the fruits of the Spirit—

love and meekness—there the Spirit is. The title-deeds of the Church are her holiness and the purity of her witness, not fables and vain genealogies. The reality of the Lord's Supper depends on the repentance, faith, humility, and love of the receiver. The witness of the Church is not to the commandments of men, but to the broad truths taught us in the Lord's Prayer, from which we learn that—True godliness depends on our relation to our Father in heaven; on our reverence for His holy Name; on our efforts to further His Kingdom; on our determination to do His will; on our toil for the bread of life; on our forgiveness of our brethren, as the condition of that Divine forgiveness which each of us so sorely needs; on our struggle against temptation; on our prayer and effort to be delivered from the evil. The ten commandments are the catechism of all morality; in the Lord's Prayer lies the essence of all religion which is pure and undefiled."

II.—The Doxology an Argument in Prayer.

We are warranted to ask blessings which might otherwise be withheld, and to obtain which we are encouraged to be importunate (see Chapter I.) We may plead with God, employing arguments the strongest of which are drawn from His own character. When appealing to our fellow-men, we urge as pleas their capacity, generosity, past favours, and their own encouragements.

The Bible is full of illustrations of such pleading

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to Thy loving-kindness. Thou hast delivered me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer." So here we plead what God is known to be, as an argument why He should act in accordance with His own attributes; not what we are, but what He is; not the smallness of our sins, but the greatness of His mercy; not the minuteness of our wants, but the magnitude of His power; not the sincerity of our prayer, but the majesty of His throne, the depth of His love, the glory of His grace.

We plead first the prerogative of royalty. We have prayed that His Name may be hallowed, His Kingdom come, His will be done. It is for the King to establish His own rule. We have asked for a Kingdom which is His own and not another's. Therefore, O Lord, establish it, reveal it, extend it, perfect it, help us in promoting it, plead Thine own cause, assert Thine own authority, "Thy Kingdom come, for Thine is the Kingdom."

We also plead for ourselves. The King alone can forgive offences against Himself. Our long-suffering Father is on the throne, whose "property is always to show mercy and to forgive." Therefore we plead, "Forgive us our sins, for Thine is the Kingdom." The King is the fountain of honour. None carry titles in a land but by sanction of its ruler. In appealing to God as Father, we seek adoption as His children—an honour infinitely surpassing whatever earthly kings can give. Grant us this nobility to call

Thee "Father"—for "Thine is the Kingdom"! No fear of asking more than He has to give, need trouble those who can say, "Thine is the Kingdom." It is reported of Alexander, that he once gave permission to a friend to demand of the royal treasurer any gift he pleased. The treasurer appealed to the monarch, thinking the grant too much for any subject to receive. The king replied, "But not too much for Alexander to give." When we consider the boon we ask—pardon, victory, the supply of all need, Divine sonship—we might be discouraged by the vastness of our request, were it not for the assurance that it is not too much for Him to bestow to whom we say, "Thine is the Kingdom."

So also we plead His power. Men may say, "I would, if I could"; but "is anything too hard for the Lord?" He who said, "Let there be light," can say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou *canst* make me clean." His promise to Abraham was joined with the assertion, "I am the Almighty God"; which title all the children of Abraham by faith may plead. When we feel the force of evil influences, and when in the cause of truth we are ready to say, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought," we are encouraged to continue to pray, "Thy Kingdom come," by the plea, "For Thine is the power"!

So also we plead God's glory. "It is Thine already; wilt Thou not act consistently with it? Has it not been Thy glory to listen to Thy children,

to supply their need, to forgive their sins, to defend them from evil, to uphold Thine own authority, to secure the performance of Thy Will? Do this still, for Thine, O Lord, is the glory." Thus Moses pleaded: "Pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy mercy"; and David: "For Thy Name's sake, pardon mine iniquity"; and Daniel: "O Lord, hearken and do for Thine own sake, Thy people are called by Thy name." Thus our Divine Exemplar pleaded: "Father, glorify Thy Name." Thus we also plead His own honour. "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, what things Thou didst in their days, and in the old time before them. O Lord, arise, help us and deliver us, for Thy Name's sake! O Lord, arise, help us and deliver us, for Thine honour."

III.—The Doxology an Ascription of Praise.

We praise God *for His gifts.* "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." "In everything give thanks." Our Lord, who revealed the Father, welcomed the expression of praise in the one leper who returned to give thanks for his cure. He Himself gave thanks at the miracle of the loaves, when He instituted the Supper, and at Emmaus after His resurrection. For every blessing of this life we should praise the Giver; but above all for His "inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace and for

the hope of glory." Therefore "it is meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty Everlasting God."

Delight in the giver is a still higher form of praise than gratitude for the gift. A loving child says not so much "I want a gift," as "I love my father." A mother is pleased with the recognition of her tender heart more than of her helping hand. The children of God thus delight in Himself. The glorious company of heaven unite in the anthem, "Glory and power be unto our God for ever and ever." The Church on earth responds, saying, "We praise Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee, for Thy great glory." Such praise should ever blend with our prayers. "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Without thankfulness it would not be for our good that fresh favours should be bestowed. On the wings of supplication we soar to the throne, and while gazing on its glory our petitions are brightened by the lustre, and transfigured into praise. Thy Kingdom come: we adore Thee; Thine *is* the Kingdom! Thy will be done: we magnify Thee; Thine *is* the power! we desire Thy glory: Hallelujah; Thine *is* the glory! We know our requests are already heard. "Before ye call I will answer, and while ye are yet speaking I will hear." Therefore, while praying "Thy Kingdom come," we may join the Church triumphant in the song, "We give Thee

thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which wert and art and art to come, because Thou *hast taken* to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned."

Such praise to God is the best expression and aid of union amongst the worshippers. Christians who differ in opinion may agree in praise. As at a political meeting of loyal citizens who sincerely and zealously advocate differing methods of promoting the common weal, there may be many voices so uplifted together in debate that no coherent utterance may be distinguishable, yet when all stand up together, and the national anthem is sung, all those discordant voices blend in the harmony; so is it in the songs of the Church. Controversy is hushed when we "praise God from whom all blessings flow." This also links earth with heaven. Departed saints have ceased to need many of the prayers we offer, but they still praise as we do, if not for the same gifts, the same Giver. And angels unite in this Liturgy. They have no higher employ, or purer joy. "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

CHAPTER X.

"FOR EVER—AMEN."

"FOR EVER." All created things change, pass away, perish: God the Creator abideth for ever: those things alone abide everlastingly which partake of His Divine nature. He only hath immortality, and whatsoever dwells in Him. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Objects of chief desire and pride in this life will perish—Worldly Wealth, Appetite, Lust, Pleasure, Beauty, Strength, Power, Position, Fame—pass away; but godly faith, Divine love, virtue, righteousness, purity, true manliness, courage, self-sacrifice, generosity, charity—these are imperishable because Divine—they are "for ever and ever." If we ourselves would be for ever we must do His will; and belong to His everlasting Kingdom.

"Thine is the Kingdom for ever!" We rejoice that "Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations"—Thine the "power for ever"! Not a reservoir to be emptied, not a force which may be spent. "Thine is the glory for ever!"—not a fading flower, a passing wind, a transient meteor. The glory of

God is His love, and "His mercy endureth for ever." Jesus, the brightest manifestation of the Divine Glory, is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Is it unreasonable to hope that they who praise a God who liveth "for ever," will share in that "for ever"? Will beings so endowed perish? Although the Old Testament says little of immortality in direct terms; it tells of those who worshipped God as the Everlasting. Must not they whose faith and love thus rose to the eternal throne, have cherished some hope of immortality themselves? Our Lord showed that life eternal was thus revealed to them. They worshipped Jehovah, who proclaimed Himself as "the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." He was not ashamed to give Himself this title. "I am the God of those who worshipped, trusted, served me." Would God, who had enabled them to adore His everlastingness, allow them to sink into nothingness? Would He, in such case, boast of being their God? "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." "He has prepared for them a city;" an endless life with Himself; "wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." Their praise of a "God for ever" lifted them into the region of an endless life, and made them partakers of the nature they adored. "Life and immortality" are clearly "brought to light" by the Gospel. "We know that we have eternal life;" "Our life is laid with Christ in God;" "Because He lives, we live also." We exult in a kingdom, a power, a glory, which can never cease. We rapturously repeat

the Hallelujah Chorus, "For ever! For ever! For ever!" Can we who are privileged by God to render such worship, be allowed by the same God to perish? Can we conceive of Him looking with complacency on such worshippers, listening to their ascriptions, and then allowing one after another, thousands after thousands of them, millions after millions, with this word "For ever" on their lips, to drop into the grave and be themselves *dead* "for ever"?

No! We are ourselves for ever if we really worship a "for-ever God." All our interests are thus lifted up into the great future. It is not for the present merely that we pray. The Kingdom we seek to promote is for ever; the Will we wish to be done is for ever; the bread we ask in the strength it imparts for promoting that Kingdom and doing that will, has a bearing on the "for ever"; the forgiveness is pardon for ever; the trials in which we ask succour are a discipline for the for-ever life, and the deliverance from all evil is a deliverance for ever. Thus all things about which we now pray are linked with the life eternal. It is "God our Father for ever" who provides our bread, orders our steps, appoints our trials, for our good and His glory for ever. Thus, nothing that happens to us is trivial when we bring it in prayer to the region of the "for ever."

When the writer was in Jerusalem, he visited the ancient quarries beneath the city, where are seen heaps of chippings, and marks on the rock showing the size and form of the great stones which had been excavated

for building the temple. These were afterwards laid in their courses without sound of hammer, axe, or chisel. Here, in these dark caverns, were prepared the goodly stones which were to form parts of that majestic structure on Mount Moriah, where the sacred feasts were celebrated, and the sacrifices were offered, and the anthems of Hallelujah resounded, and the Shekinah of God was revealed. How mean in itself the condition of any one stone, hewn and chipped in that dark cave; but when its purpose was contemplated, what dignity invested every touch of the shaping tool, and every minutest part of the process that was preparing it for taking its place in the temple of God! And so with all the circumstances of our earthly life. Our daily joys, sorrows, and toils are no longer insignificant when overruled by the great Master Builder, to constitute us temples of the Holy Ghost now, and to prepare us for a place in the heavenly Jerusalem, the house not made with hands, where God reveals His unveiled glory, and every stone of the structure is resplendent with the reflection of Himself; not insignificant when we consider that these little things of our earthly existence are fashioning us as living stones for the temple of God, by establishing His Kingdom in our hearts, by moulding our will to His, by giving us victory over temptation, by purifying our hearts from sin, by enabling us to appeal to Him as "Our Father in heaven," and to ascribe to Him "the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, FOR EVER."

Amen.

Amen is the echo of earth to heaven: it is man's response to God. This very word was uttered three thousand five hundred years ago, when the Israelites worshipped in the wilderness, and afterwards when they responded to the priests in the temple. Our Lord often uttered it, and the apostles and early Church habitually employed it; martyrs have died with it on their lips, and at the present day it is used throughout the world by "all who profess and call themselves Christians." For it has been transferred without translation into every language, so that Chinaman and Hottentot, Greenlander and Hindoo, however varied their speech, utter the same Amen. Thus it is a universal bond and badge of union among all Christians. Day by day, among all nations, this response is made to the one Father, anticipating the day when the Kingdom shall fully have come on earth, and when the whole creation will resound with one harmonious, all-comprehensive Amen to God.

Amen is a *strong affirmation*; so our Lord employed it in uttering important truth in relation to regeneration, John iii. 3; and immortality, John viii. 51. *He is Himself the Divine Amen*, testifying and ratifying the truth of God. This is one of His titles, "Thus saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness." "All the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God." The promises are fulfilled for ever by Him. His life on earth was His

Amen to all that God is in heaven. His words of wisdom, miracles of goodness, life of purity, proclamation of mercy, death on the Cross, were His Amen to the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. His resurrection and ascension were His Amen to His own claims and His people's hopes. His gift of the Spirit was His Amen to His promises and the need of His Church; and His intercession is a continual Amen to us, who in His Name "come with boldness to the throne of grace." This gives special interest to our use of the word. Keeping in mind that Christ is the great Amen, every Amen we utter is prayer and praise in His name. It is the *expression of confirmed and earnest desire.* The Amen of affirmation says, "So it is"; of supplication, "So let it be." We utter our petitions, and then, briefly reconsidering and summing up the whole, we pray Amen. It also means *expectation of receiving* what we ask. Our petitions have not exceeded what it is in God's power and for His glory to bestow, or what He has encouraged us to ask; and so we utter the Amen of faith. It means *confidence in our Father.* Whether He answers us in the way we wish or not, we trust His wisdom and love. This word is the riveting of a nail to make it fast, the sealing of a document to render it valid, the endorsing of a cheque to give it currency, the addition of an oath to confirm a promise.

Suitable in private prayer, it is specially valuable in united worship as *the adoption by the many of the utterances of the one who speaks.* So the tribes solemnly

assented to the blessings and curses pronounced by the Levites on Ebal and Gerizim. So, when David brought up the ark to Mount Zion, after the doxology, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever . . . all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord." When the congregation might not be able to unite with the choir in the anthem, at its close they associated themselves with the whole of it by their own Amen. On the return from captivity, when Ezra "blessed the Lord, the great God," "all the people stood up and answered, Amen and Amen, lifting up their hands," indicating not only their verbal concurrence, but their purpose to hear and obey. That such response was general may be inferred from the words of the Psalmist, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen." Not the ministers alone, or the choir, but "all the people:" men, women, children; not mentally merely, but audibly. "Let *all* the people *say* Amen." If, as Archbishop Leighton says, "all Christians are God's clergy"; if, as St. Peter says, they are a "holy priesthood"; if, as the anthem of the Blessed says, they are "kings and priests unto God," let them not leave all vocal worship to officials, —priest, presbyter, or pastor,—but assert their own priesthood by this united response. This was the custom of the early Church. St. Paul asks how can people "say Amen at the giving of thanks," if the language is unknown? In heaven the Amen of gathered voices is the most familiar sound. To the

anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," the four living ones, representing the highest orders of angelic nature, "said Amen." And after the Hallelujah anthem, "the four-and-twenty elders, and the four living ones, fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah!"

This impressive response was practised by the early Church. Jerome says that at the end of every public utterance of prayer and praise, the united Amen of the people sounded like the waves of the sea falling on the shore, or the voice of thunder. "The hollow idols, and their temples that were empty, did echo and rebound the Church's Amen, so that their fabrics shaked." It was not a merely mental assent, nor a smothered whisper, but such an outburst of emotion as made it evident that all the people assented, thus stimulating the devotion of the worshippers, and testifying to strangers their stedfast faith. Alluding to the early method of celebrating the Lord's Supper, the Dean of Westminster (Stanley) says: "The consecration was not complete till it had been ratified in the most solemn way by the congregation. For it was at this point that there came, like the peal of thunder, the one word which has lasted through all changes and all liturgies—the word which was intended to express the entire, truthful assent of the people to what was done and said—Amen."

The Dean of Canterbury (Farrar) says: "I wish that beside our choirs we had in every church the proper choir of some thousand voices. All the forms in the

world are not so dear to Christ as one 'Amen' of one congregation uttered from a pure heart fervently. 'Amen' is pre-eminently the word of Christian congregations who want to pray and not to be prayed for, to sing and not to be sung to. Alas! most Christians have forgotten, they have been fatally taught to forget what Christ and the Apostles taught: that there are in the Christian Church no priests, except so far as all are priests; that presbyters are purely representative, and in no sense vicarious; that the veil of partition is rent asunder from the top throughout; and that the very humblest may have free, unimpeded, personal access direct, and with no need for any intermediary but Christ into the immediate Presence, into the very Holy of Holies of the Eternal God. Mere formal prayers, read to you but not offered by you—at which you are present, but in which you take no part—are utterly unavailing. You might just as well patent a machine to do it for you. But where the prayers have been your prayers, fervent, effectual, humble; when the heartfelt 'Amen' puts the petition you have offered into the hands of God, the expression of your belief in His love and wisdom, then into your Amen you concentrate all your requests, and, as Luther says, 'As your Amen is, so has been your prayer.'"

A Puritan writer says: "When we set our seal to the truth of God and say Amen, it is a word that fills earth and heaven: there is not a joyfuller word in the world than when whole congregations say and shout

Amen" (Sibbs). Another says: "The united breath of God's people sends a blast upon their enemies; the trumpet blew, and the people shouted, and Jericho fell down to the ground. If any single soul pray in faith, it shall be heard; how much more when the whole congregation is in harmony, and unanimously cries 'Amen'! God will say 'Amen' to such Amens" (Woodcock). Such a collective response to prayer, whether liturgical or "free," is grander than any music of organ and choir; and more impressive than any sermon is the confession thus given by all to the reality of worship and the truth of God. The term "Puritan" was given scornfully, not to any special sect, but to all who advocated and exhibited a life pure from worldly folly and fashionable vice. "Men called the Puritans austere. In the Circean sty of the Court of Charles II., Puritans were held up by actors stained with every vice, to audiences degraded with all uncleanness, as sour and canting hypocrites. Naturally enough! To godless worldlings all zeal is pretence, and all religion is cant. Puritanism was nobly austere, in the dignity of a manhood which loved righteousness and hated shams. But was it sour? Well, I for one would rather enjoy one hour of Milton's rapture, than whole years of the laughter of fools. The Puritans, at least, knew how to pray, and the meaning of 'Amen' had not become to them a dead letter" (Dean Farrar).

While many say Amen to the world's fashions and favour, self-indulgence and sin, to the flesh and the

devil, let our heart ever respond with its Amen to God. He says, "Seek ye my face": let us reply, "Amen! Thy face, Lord, will I seek." He calls, "Return, ye backsliding children": "Amen! behold, we come unto Thee." Jesus stands at the door and knocks: our opening the door is the soul's Amen. He commands: Amen! we obey. He promises: Amen! we believe. He leads: Amen! we follow. Amen is the answer of a good conscience towards God. Amen accepts the Divine covenant: "Come out from among them, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." What honour and joy to respond to all His appointments, even unto death; as Cyprian, when condemned to be slain by the sword, exclaimed, "Amen!" When the heavenly Bridegroom says, "Surely I come quickly," the Bride replies, "Amen! even so come, Lord Jesus." "If we say Amen to God's invitation, He says Amen to our salvation."

Amen is an emphatic and comprehensive summary of the Lord's Prayer; responding to it as a whole, omitting no one petition. "Our Father which art in heaven." Amen! Creator, Preserver, Redeemer,—"Abba, Father"—Amen! May we rejoice in Thy love as our Father, and rely on Thee for sustenance, protection, culture, discipline, comfort, and all we need to fit us for the inheritance Thou hast provided for Thy children. May the word "Our" reprove selfishness. May we recognise the brotherhood of man in the one Divine Fatherhood. May obedient

homage blend with filial confidence. Trusting Thee fully, yielding ourselves to Thee absolutely, communing with Thee as children, may we more and more respond to this title—"Our Father which art in heaven." Amen.

"Hallowed be Thy Name." Amen! May God, as revealed in His Son, be loved and reverenced. May the Name of Jesus, who is "the Image of the invisible God," be dear to all hearts. May we have true conceptions of this Name, fail not in worship and service; and by hallowing it ourselves, impress others with its majesty and goodness. "Thy Name is LOVE." By the whole earth "Hallowed be Thy Name"! Amen!

"Thy Kingdom come!" Amen! Let Thy rule universally triumph, and may we who pray for it strive to promote it. Let Thy Kingdom come in every church by increasing purity and usefulness; in our hearts by more absolute self-surrender. O for the time when Christ shall come again to claim this world as His; when tyranny, war, greed, lust, pride, poverty, sickness, sorrow, death, shall be known no more! We "love Thine appearing!" We are "looking for this blessed hope!" "Let the whole earth be filled with Thy glory!" Amen, and Amen!

"Thy will be done on earth even as it is done in heaven." Amen! We rejoice that Thy will rules the universe; not fate, or force, or chance. As Thou art our Father, that Will must be Thy glory and our good; O let it be done! By men as by angels, not from compulsion but from love; cheerfully, promptly

unstintedly, freely, intelligently, prayerfully, always. Let *me* do it; let *us* do it; let *all* do it, in passive submission as in active service. "Father, not my will but Thine be done." In the blending of our own will with Thine may we enjoy "the peace of God that passeth all understanding." So let it be done here on earth and now, even "as it is done in heaven." Amen!

"Give us this day our daily bread." Amen! Thou who hast made us to hallow Thy Name and long for Thy Kingdom, wilt not suffer us to lack any good thing. Thou who didst feed Israel with manna and perform the miracle of the loaves, dost by that same word "give and preserve for our use the kindly fruits of the earth." Give us seasonable food; enough for our need from day to day; and help us to trust Thee for to-morrow. We ask for one another, for the family, the nation, the world; for our friends, for our foes, Give *us!* May we feel our dependence; cherish gratitude; be diligent in the use of means; not waste Thy gifts, but share with others for whom also we ask it. And with food for the body, O give us the Living Bread to strengthen the soul. Amen!

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Our debts are written in Thy book. O cancel them! Thou hast sent Thy Son to discharge the mighty debt for all who trust in Him. We ask for pardon in His Name: Amen! May we be truly contrite because of sin, confess it and forsake it. Pardon also our neighbours, our enemies, mankind!

We do not ask mercy which we ourselves refuse to show. We cannot ask pardon for those to whom we deny it. We have forgiven, we do forgive! O help us to forgive others more generously, more fully, and do Thou forgive both them and us. Amen!

"And lead us not into temptation." Amen. Sin is our grief and shame: guard us from the repetition of it. It has shown us our weakness: be Thou our strength. So direct the circumstances of life that the temptations we cannot avoid may not be beyond our strength to resist. Break the force of hostile influences in the world, in our companions, in our condition, in ourselves. Set a hedge around us. Let us not "be tempted above that we are able, but do Thou with every temptation make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it." Amen! Thou who "Thyself hast suffered, being tempted, art able to succour us the tempted." Let us not go into the perils into which we ask Thee not to bring us. May we watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. Preserve others from the dangers which we dread for ourselves; and let us not by carelessness or selfish indulgence allure to perilous paths from which we ourselves ask to be preserved. Amen!

"But deliver us from the evil." Amen! Save us from the Adversary who tempts us to destroy us. May we be watchful against his devices, and brave to resist his assaults. Thou who didst come to destroy the works of the devil, destroy his works in us. Deliver us from the evil in ourselves. Cleanse the

thoughts of our hearts. May we be filled with the Spirit, and so have no vacant space for the Evil One to enter. Deliver us from all the evil tendencies of our own hearts; from all the evil consequences of sin; let sin itself be soon destroyed, and may we be perfectly conformed to the image of our Father. Amen! and Amen!

"Our Father which art in heaven!" Hear, we beseech Thee, these Thy children's prayers, responding to the teaching of Thy Son. Wilt Thou not grant what Thou hast instructed us to ask? Earth echoes back the voice of heaven. We ratify with rejoicing hearts the Divine word. Thine is already the Kingdom for which we pray! Thine is the power to secure obedience to Thy will! Thine is the glory which in all our prayers we seek! We bless Thee for Thy gifts! We adore Thee for Thyself! King for ever; Mighty for ever; Glorious for ever! OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN, THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER. AMEN.

—o—

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

OUR Father Who in heaven dost dwell,
In love directing all things well,
Hallowed for ever be Thy Name,
Let earth and heaven Thy praise proclaim.

Soon may Thy glorious Kingdom come,
In homage not one voice be dumb;
Thy loving will obeyed on earth,
E'en as by those of heavenly birth.

Our needful bread give day by day,
Take all our trespasses away ;
And as for pardon we entreat,
So let us show forgiveness meet.

Preserve us in temptation's hour,
Thy children save from Satan's power ;
For Thine the rule, strength, glory be,
Both now and through eternity.

THE DOXOLOGY.

The Kingdom, Lord, is Thine,
The right o'er all to reign ;
None can assail Thy throne Divine,
Nor of Thy laws complain.

The Power, O Lord, is Thine
To vindicate the Right ;
With strength Thy love doth intertwine,
Mercy allied to might.

The Glory, Lord, is Thine ;
All praise to Thee be given !
Through all Thy works Thy wonders shine,
In earth and highest heaven.

For evermore the praise,
The Kingdom, power, belong
To Thee ; throughout eternal days,
Creation's endless song.

Amen ! the chorus rings
From earth to heaven again ;
The universe adoring sings
One blessèd, glad AMEN !

—N. H.

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